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# Metaphor in Social Thought

David Malcolm Lambourn

Abstract

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A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of Warwick  
Department of Sociology

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## Abstract:

Whereas a number of influences have directed the attention of sociologists and others towards language as a feature of social phenomena, these same influences have served to reveal wide discrepancies in the place accorded to figurative language, and to metaphor in particular. This has proved to be the case both in respect of the phenomena studied and of the subsequent writing. These influences have included, *inter alia*, 'the linguistic turn' in philosophy, the rise and fall of structuralism both as philosophy and as a model for anthropology, and also in the development of ethnomethodology from phenomenology.

The thesis specifically locates the enquiry within the writer's biography and is not sited within any one traditional discipline, but has rather been a reading 'between literature and science' and one 'privileging' metaphor over concept. The attempt to explore the 'privileging' of metaphor over concept renders problematic an understanding of language as *langue*, and prefers *parole*. Rendering language problematic has consequences for how knowledge and science are understood. In parallel with the reading, an ethnomethodological study of a school was undertaken in order to provide a context in which the outcomes of the reading could be sited and compared, leading to a consideration of metaphor within ethnography.

With these starting assumptions, a report is made of a limited number of authors who have been widely acknowledged as influential in considerations of metaphor. Aristotle is read, through and against recent interpreters, as if an ontology of metaphor were considered undesirable. This leads to an understanding of metaphor as a tool. Hobbes is seen through the work of Quentin Skinner as one who, influenced by his contemporary Descartes, is critical of the use of metaphor in spite of his articulate use of it. Vico, not widely influential until the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reveals a diachronic picture of the primacy of metaphor in relation to the development of concepts, later supported by Herder who offered a complementary, though synchronic, version. Nietzsche, writing in a post-Darwin context, sees the formation of metaphor as the fundamental human drive and links it with truth as a value. Work on

metaphor during the latter parts of the twentieth century is described beginning with I. A. Richards, leading to brief considerations, inter alia, of Max Black, W. V. O. Quine, Mary Hesse, Rom Harré and Hayden White. Writers in the social sciences who have been explicit about the part played by metaphor, Victor Turner, R. H. Brown, R. A. Nisbet and D. McCloskey are acknowledged. Donald Davidson is seen as particularly influential, denying the possibility of a separate notion of metaphorical meaning and confirming a denial of *langue*. Richard Rorty is seen as a writer who has treated metaphor positively in his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* and his use of metaphor there is examined in its variety. Throughout, the Nietzschean view of the formation of metaphor as the fundamental human drive is connected with Cohen's view that metaphor cultivates intimacy. It is on this basis that the above writers, some of whom would otherwise be seen as belonging to different genres, most prominently philosophy, have contributed to social thought, and to the place of metaphor within it. The insight into metaphor as a fundamental human drive and as cultivating intimacy is then linked with the view that metaphor becomes valued as concept by virtue of the work done in linking past action to new circumstances. This combination, one linking metaphor with pragmatism, is used as a pattern by which to inspect others' writings. The widespread rejection or devaluation of metaphor in social theory could then be related to its role having been undermined by the rhetoric of natural science, though freed somewhat by T. S. Kuhn, an undermining which threatens creativity and the cultivation of intimacy with its implications for the formation and sustaining of communities.

The supposition, for reasons of the production of social science, that once the analogies contained in or suggested by a metaphor may thereafter be discarded, is resisted on the grounds that history is overlooked, persons are no longer seen in relation, knowing and certainty work to bring play to an end, learning is transformed from personal engagement to instruction, community is replaced by rules for rational conduct, and obedience replaces discovery and growth. Metaphor explicitly identified offers hope.



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### Declaration:

I confirm first, that this thesis is my own work; second, that it contains a statement of part of the conclusion of my thesis *A Perceptual Paradigm for the Study of Adult Learning*, M.Ed (Adult Education) Manchester (1978); and third, that it has not otherwise been submitted for a degree at another university.

### Acknowledgement:

The task for this sentence is to invite readers to construct their own understanding of the quality of conversation and friendship which the writer has enjoyed with Professor Peter Wagner during the writing of this thesis.

### Writing conventions:

1. Throughout, I refer to Richard Rorty's *Contingency Irony and Solidarity* (Rorty 1989) as CIS.
2. All emphases are original, unless otherwise stated.

# Introduction

*What is happening, today, with metaphor?*

*Qu'est-ce qui se passe. aujourd'hui, avec la métaphore?*

*And without metaphor what is happening?*

*Et de la métaphore qu'est-ce qui se passe?*

It is a very old subject. It occupies the West, inhabits it or lets itself be inhabited: representing itself there as an enormous library in which we would move about without perceiving its limits, proceeding from station to station, going on foot, step by step, or in a bus (we commute already with the 'bus' that I have just named, in translation and, according to the principle of translation, between *Übertragung* and *Übersetzung*,, *metaphorikos* still designating today, in what one calls 'modern' Greek, that which concerns means of transportation). *Metaphora* circulates in the city, it conveys us like its inhabitants, along all sorts of passages, with intersections, red lights, one-way streets, cross-roads or crossings, patrolled zones and speed limits. We are in a certain way - metaphorically of course, and as concerns the mode of habitation - the content and tenor of this vehicle: passengers, comprehended and displaced by metaphor.

A strange statement to start off - you might say.

Yes indeed. But you have long since recognized every word to the beginning of this line as the opening of the initial form of Jacques Derrida's lecture *The Retrait of Metaphor* which was first read on 1st June 1978 at the University of Geneva. If you did not know the work, you would have recognized the style and been able to name the author, or the author whose style was being copied. The lecture is a piece marked by its congruence with its subject, a *veritable* demonstration, which I both admire and eschew for its sustained style. It is not my style. I am not Derrida, which is to say that I am not a Algerian French citizen become professor, a member of the establishment

living and working in the capital, Paris. You are unlikely to be reading this in the University of Geneva. It is not 1978.

I am called David Lambourn and I am still curious about metaphor. A user long before I knew the word, I was first introduced to it, explicitly, in my third year at secondary school. I never got a satisfying answer as to how I should tell one from a simile, nor was I ever given to understand that there was anything at all problematic about it. Any questions I had were seen simply as examples of my failure to meet the standards expected.

Outside of the world of literature there seems to be ambivalence, even resistance, to metaphor. Why should a social theorist or any of those of us, such as teachers, lawyers, economists, social workers, even parents, who draw upon knowledge derived from the social/cultural sciences, take seriously those sentences which are clearly false? Unless the philosopher mischievously so names his pet, Richard is not a lion.

Metaphor has long been a contested concept. Statements of a definitional kind, nor exemplars, nor the categories deployed to demonstrate how metaphor may be understood 'to work', remain uncontested. That so commonplace a feature of language, one with which we are so easily 'at home', which enlivens our everyday conversation, extends our understandings and informs our actions, should be contested, continues to arouse my curiosity.

What follows should be read as part of a biography. In saying this, it is intended that what is written should be understood as belonging to a particular life, the observations necessarily selected from among a much greater possible number and, thereby, at least, are presented as perspectival. Any conclusions which may be thought possible will be offered merely as aids to the solution of particular problems, and those in particular circumstances<sup>1</sup>. There is another reason for stressing biography, and here an analogy might be useful. There is an aphorism in biology to the effect that 'ontogeny replicates phylogeny', a claim that the life of the individual follows the evolutionary path of the species. One of the side products of my studies has led me to

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1 Gareth Morgan, who may be considered to have led a small movement in the investigation of organizations making an explicit use of metaphor, has more recently commented: "I will start by outlining my own view of metaphor. It is inherently a personal view, since this is the only place one can ever start. I want to be explicit about this, because I feel that one of the big problems in this field rests in the fact that people often assert their own personal perspective on metaphor as "the view", or the "best view", when in point of fact it is just "a view" that happens to make sense from their perspective. It is a simple trap to fall into, and I willingly recognize that some of my own writings, especially the early ones, share this problem. (Grant 1996: 227)

see a parallel in my 'cultural existence'. This presents a possibility, *inter alia*, that there is a risk of compiling a giant rationalisation for my 'life decisions', rather than 'studying metaphor and its part in social thought'.

After some five years of working jointly as parish priest and youth worker, I left the ordained ministry, no longer able to act congruently between demand and 'belief'. Judging that a career in youth work would be best continued if one were *persona grata* with teachers, I decided to train and qualify as a teacher. Having earlier read only for a Certificate in Social Administration as preparation for a proposed career in the probation service, I now chose to study at a teacher training college offering a B.Ed. with Applied Social Studies as the main subject, a course with a syllabus, but no lectures, simply a weekly group tutorial and a budget; one assessed equally through coursework and examination. Students were free to write on whatever they chose within the carefully stated syllabus, and free to work cooperatively with peers, those 'ahead' or 'following'. The budget was available to be bid for, should students wish to invite speakers, or to make visits of observation etc.

I have described these aspects of the course to set the scene for a particular, and first, essay in Applied Social Studies. I chose to write on perception, on the assumption that there seemed to be a kind of logic about perception as a beginning. I was mistaken in this assumption, as I discovered in the course of my writing. My subsequent experience was somewhat strange. It was *as if* that essay had a life of its own, serving to organize how I subsequently studied, influencing my thinking, and writing, in Social Psychology and in Curriculum Development in addition to Applied Social Studies, in ways to which I was unused. The class of the subsequent degree was well beyond anyone's initial expectations. Later, curious about the place of the essay in my thinking, I took an opportunity to explore this experience and submitted the report of the exploration, successfully, as a thesis in Adult Education to the University of Manchester. The thesis came to turn around perception, language and, in particular, metaphor. The Epilogue read as follows:

A few sentences by way of conclusion? Convention requires a brief, modest statement of 'the contribution to knowledge'. In this thesis no such claim may be made... The thesis is a photograph of a constantly moving sea, with all the drawbacks of too long an exposure. Judged by its contribution to new knowledge it must surely fail; by its undermining of some of the

assumptions of some small parts of what is currently taken for knowledge, it might be thought to enable a subsequent valuable contribution to be made. But such a judgment is not sought. Rather, it is hoped, that it will be judged as a display. A display that one might sit lightly by certitude; that meaning does not evaporate in the absence of 'objective knowledge'; that it is possible to generate interesting views from a relatively simple model of man as one who sees, talks and earns a living among others in a context of widely differing power. Further, it is hoped, that it displays the possibility that even those who are accustomed to 'grounding' their knowledge on 'foundations' - the metaphors are over-pervasive - might yet allow that they might be victims of illusion, and in consequence be prepared to acknowledge, in their cognitive structures, that they live on the rapids. (Lambourn 1978: 209)

Purple prose perhaps, but in the meantime much has changed, and very rapidly. The thesis was submitted at the beginning of 1978. In the same year Ricoeur's *Rule of Metaphor* was published in English. In the following year the first edition of Ortony's *Metaphor and Thought* was published (a second edition in 1993). Lakoff and Johnson published *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, Johnson published an edited volume, *Philosophical Perspectives on Metaphor* in 1981, Derrida's *Retrait* was first presented in 1978 and not available in English until 1987, *White Mythology* followed in 1982. International interdisciplinary conferences began with a flurry; there were four in the academic year beginning in September 1977. In September at the University of Illinois, a conference which led to Ortony's *Metaphor and Thought*. In January 1978 at the University of Geneva. *Philosophy and Metaphor* with Derrida, Ricoeur, André de Muralt, Roger Dragonetti. In the February at the University of Chicago, with Ricoeur, de Man, Davidson, Black, Goodman, and others, leading to Sacks' *Metaphor*, and one at the University of California (Davis) an *Interdisciplinary Conference on Metaphor* (mentioned in Derrida's *Retrait*. (Derrida, 1998: 104). David Cooper published a study under the title *Metaphor*, in 1986. Van Noppen and Hols, building on a bibliography and history of metaphor published by Shibbles, published *A Classified Bibliography of Publications 1985 to 1990* in 1990 which identified some 3,500 items published in that period. Sarah Kofman's *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, developed from a paper first given to one of Derrida's seminars in 1972, appeared in English in 1993. (Respectively: (Ricoeur 1978), (Ortony 1993), (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), (Johnson 1981), [Derrida, 1998 (1978) #363], (Derrida 1982), (Ortony 1993), (Sacks 1979), (Cooper 1986), (Shibbles 1971), (van Noppen and Hols 1990), and (Kofman 1993).)

Items which bear more directly upon the social sciences have similarly appeared: R. H. Brown *A Poetic for Sociology* was published in the year I was writing, and Edmondson's *Rhetoric in Sociology* was published in 1984. Bryan Green published *Literary Methods in Sociological Theory* in 1988.

McCloskey published *The Rhetoric of Economics* in 1986. Other significant volumes have been: David Lodge's *Modes of Modern Writing*, a typology of modern writing based upon Jakobson's distinction between metaphor and metonymy, was first published in 1977 with a second edition in 1997; Ray Gibbs' *The Poetics of Mind* in 1994. *Metaphors: Figures of the Mind* by Zdravko Radman, a volume asking what metaphor might indicate about the mind, in 1997. (Respectively: (Brown 1977), (Edmondson 1984), (Green 1988), (McCloskey 1986), (Lodge 1977), (Gibbs 1994) and (Radman 1997).

I remained ignorant of much of this material until after I returned, in 1996, to read further on metaphor as providing a link between ethnography and social theory. In between, I had published some research on teaching in higher education based upon Rom Harré's distinction between homeomorphs and paramorphs in models within science; paramorphs being close cousins to metaphor (Lambourn 1980). Early in my current study, I was introduced to the writings of Richard Rorty and upon pursuing these was immediately very encouraged, and have so remained. My earlier thesis, which made a claim to display "the possibility that even those who are accustomed to 'grounding' their knowledge on 'foundations' - the metaphors are over-pervasive - might yet allow that they might be victims of illusion," (Lambourn 1978) had now found a writer who, subsequently, had arrived at a similar view, albeit by a very different route. It was as if I had been freed from something rather akin to guilt for thinking the thoughts I had. What follows will be very close to Richard Rorty's project as stated most succinctly, for present purposes, in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (CIS) (Rorty 1989), but there will be occasions of distance, some proposed additions, and suggestions for further redescription. A few months into my study I came to frame a very open question: What might result from reading whilst 'holding metaphor at the centre'? Not sure in any detail quite what I meant by that question, I began reading in social theory and in ethnography. I also began a limited ethnographic study in a school, this was based on an assumption that the regular observation of a relatively small organisation/community, alongside my reading, would provide the possibility of movement between perspectives, offering, if you will, a kind of binocular vision or, alternatively, providing a tension which would present puzzles requiring further elucidation, or perhaps re-description. In the event, both possibilities emerged. Extracts from the field

recordings are included below, normally in an illustrative role. It might be objected that illustration, although offered explicitly as clarification, might also be providing some rhetorical services. Whilst much may be conceded to such an objection, an attempt to justify the inclusion of such illustrations will be made, by an eventual appeal to my conclusions, which will turn around a view of language sited, paradigmatically, in conversation. A thesis may be construed as part of a conversation but only in an extended use of that term, so occasions for modifying some conventions in order to overcome the gap will arise from time to time.

I rationalize my interest by speaking of my curiosity about metaphor. And I can produce some justification for this. Metaphor is a rogue in language as traditionally conceived, a suspicion arises that its further investigation or exploration is at best counter-intuitive. Although metaphor is esteemed in literature, recognized in some parts of natural science and so little considered in sociology - Wolf Lepenies' study *Between Literature and Science: the Rise of Sociology* (Lepenies 1988) in an index of about 1000 items, has no entry for metaphor. That a sociologist of Goffman's insights should appear to deny his clear use of metaphor, as in the last pages of *The Presentation of Self* (Goffman 1959) further aroused my curiosity. That the first of English philosophers should be as hard on metaphor as was Hobbes, and followed by Locke, was a source of intellectual disturbance. Hobbes' lines on "the seven causes of absurdity" of which "the sixth, (is) to the use of metaphors, tropes, and other rhetorical figures, instead of words proper" once read, remained as an irritation for which I had found no relief. Locke's "all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats" (Locke 1894: Book III, Ch. X, §34.) had a similar effect. However, it would be somewhat naïve to let the issue of my rationalization rest at that point. For it does so serve to conceal the necessity to characterize the kind of work which will follow. Adapting Thomas Kuhn's terminology, I see myself as aspiring to something 'revolutionary' rather than 'normal', my hopes at the beginning of this project extend towards an expectation that there will come a moment when a conclusion will be reached at which it might be possible to say that we have long been asking some inappropriate questions.

In following the lead of writers including, *inter alia*, Vico, Nietzsche and Gadamer, writers who



have explored the place of metaphor in the context of the origins of language, the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines will be met and crossed. The borders separating, or joining, 'the natural' and 'the social' will continue to be problematized and attempts made to redescribe them for identifiable purposes.

The many attempts to theorise metaphor have included, *inter alia*, characterizations of metaphor as 'comparison', as 'without meaning', as 'anomaly', 'speech act', 'loose talk', 'interaction', and 'intentional category mistakes'. Many are convincing, well-illustrated, descriptions, and are precisely contested by others with just as convincing illustrations. Many are perhaps best understood as part of a programme to strengthen the claims of one discipline or another to be taken seriously, in that they are able to offer an account of an enigmatic feature of language. This resistance to conceptualizing suggests that it might be more helpful to consider metaphor in terms of its uses. I offer little consideration of attempts to describe metaphor as an artefact seen from any particular discipline, little consideration of ontology.

Instead, I begin to write with that aim in view which has guided my reading throughout: to hold metaphor at the centre, simple to state but not clear enough to act as a detailed guide. Mindful of Aristotle's remark that it is not entirely appropriate for a slave to use metaphor in front of his master, this interest in metaphor has come to feel, at times, like *hubris*..

In my defence, I do not attempt to write an encyclopedic account of metaphor, nor to attempt a 'balanced' account. I shall not be much concerned to make any explicit effort to present a balanced account of previous writers on metaphor, nor will there be attempts at 'judging' any particular writer. I have in mind a different quarry. I have, rather, been harrying at metaphor, worrying at its heels in the hope that it might reveal something of itself, even though it might not lead me to its earth. Sometimes, standing eyeball to eyeball with it, I have been fiercely determined not to be the first to blink. At other times, it has seemed more appropriate to sit motionless, silent, waiting for metaphor to make the first move, which it always does, rendering it the easier to spot.

In speaking of metaphor here, I have in mind, so to speak, a wide range of uses for this term. I shall use the term, except where the context indicates otherwise, to refer to what Burke has called "the four master-tropes".

I refer to metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. And my primary concern with them here will be not with their purely figurative usage, but with their rôle in the discovery and description of "the truth." (Burke 1969: 503)

I subscribe both to Burke's clustering and to his purposes here. He continues:

It is an evanescent moment that we shall deal with - for not only does the dividing line between the figurative and literal usages shift, but also the four tropes shade into one another. Give a man but one of them, tell him to exploit its possibilities, and if he is thorough in doing so, he will come upon the other three (Burke 1969: 503).

Setting aside the sexism of the period, I find this last sentence particularly appealing. Burke avoids all claims other than that implied in ordinary narration. It is part invitation and part narration; it invites his other to test, imaginatively or empirically, at his option and so concede agreement. I shall also have in mind, if not always on the page, two other terms not normally found in dictionaries of literary terms. They are hypostatization and reification. I take both these terms to render abstract terms as concrete and, thereby, to be examples of metaphor.

Metaphor, as I have been using it, is a word commonly regarded as a noun, used by a variety of individuals, groups and cultures to serve a variety of purposes. My wariness of its ontology signals my uncertainty that there is any one thing which this word names. I have preferred to try to by-pass this and speak rather of what processes seem to happen in those events for which metaphor is pressed into service. My wish to avoid a theory of metaphor is part of my wish to be as open as possible to alternative descriptions of these events and their processes.

To describe metaphor as deviant does not sit easily with my intention of keeping metaphor at the centre, for when faced with a description of metaphor as deviant, I am forced to render problematic the notion of language as proper. Metaphor I know, what is this language?

I cannot think of metaphor as best understood as a linguistic phenomenon alone. Nor can I write an ontology of metaphor. I understand it best, i.e., as most free of constraints, when I think of it only in terms of its work. This, in turn, suggests that it is in the realm of work, or action, that it could most fruitfully be considered. Perhaps even to suggest that whereas it has been thought of in a variety of cognitive contexts we would do better to think of it as linking the experiences of action, *rather than* as a phenomenon fully described in the lexicon of concept formation.

During the course of the study, I have, from time to time, been minded to try to classify forms of metaphor, a task which after a short while I have always set aside. I was remiss in not taking

more notice of the closing introductory remarks of Bernhard Dupriez's *Dictionary of Literary*

*Devices*:

The characteristics necessary to the definition of figures number about sixty; their possible combinations reach into the millions. Bernard Lamy was right in believing that 'the number of figures is infinite.' (Dupriez 1991: xx)

I should also have been alerted, thereby, to a different relationship between metaphor and 'language' than I had, to that time, considered.

What follows is an attempt to describe how I am now thinking about metaphor, and is made at what I take to be a temporary halt on a journey, the latest stretch of which has been a period of some four years, during which I have taken too many notes - *objets trouvés*, collected on a journey to no clear destination - and now have difficulty in setting out an account. Some of my assumptions about what a thesis should be seem to get in the way. Take the following as examples. The demands for clarity appear to devalue the roles of vagueness and ambiguity, allowing them only a pejorative connotation. Writing is at root a serial activity, and any rounded description of social activity will require multiple starting points which, in turn, will emerge as merely serially related rather than as serially organized. At the least, it will seem to be a requirement that a form of argument or, less strongly, a structure, should be erected to aid the description. As I begin to write, I know that I have not achieved such a structured description, but hope that one might emerge on the journey.

A common strategy in descriptions, is to begin with a metaphor which is then explored to set out its analogies which, in turn, are subsequently tested for their limitations. A more empirical approach would perhaps directly test the context of a metaphor for its effects. Some would object to so practical an approach on the grounds that the purpose of such descriptions, said to be the formation of knowledge, is to reduce the various costs of such testing and exploration. Whatever, it seems inappropriate to begin by setting out a metaphor for metaphor.

Many writers have proceeded as if it were appropriate to set out an ontology of metaphor. I think this to be, if not a mistaken enterprise, an unhelpful one. Even as I write this, I know that I have to answer the question, Helpful for what? For the time being, let the notion of helpfulness stand simply as an indication that my travels included something like an exploration of pragmatism which has led me to want to explore what I see to be a symbiotic link with metaphor. My strategy

will be a somewhat solipsistic one, characterized by an apparent fragmentation, a fragmentation whose necessity will, it is hoped, become clear but which might, to some extent, be overcome. I take it that descriptions do not start out entirely *de novo*. Rather, earlier descriptions are put into service in order to be added to, or modified, more or less injuriously. This runs the risk of implying that change may thereby be accounted for simply by such a method of description. Hume helps us to avoid this illusion. I wish, in the first part of the thesis, simply to identify connections between my present perceptions and the writings of others, and then to comment on the connections. In the absence of other criteria, I shall follow a chronological arrangement, but with a firm *caveat* established that this should not be taken to imply that a later writing implies a causal relation with an earlier. This *caveat* should be taken as a strong one, as in this account of metaphor, attention will be drawn to what I shall refer to as a resistance to metaphor, a resistance which seems to be a continuing feature which may be copiously illustrated over the last three hundred years, and illustrations will be offered in support of the hypothesis that this resistance operated also in earlier periods and continues in the present.

Although it might be possible to produce an account of how resistance to metaphor may itself be causally related between writers, I shall make no attempt at this, if only because it would involve something very close to arguments from silence, arguments which pose almost insuperable problems.

As I now begin to write, I am at once struck by an awareness of something like a gap between what I write and what it was that I wanted to write. I imagine that I hear others encouraging me to abandon what I have written, and suggesting that I begin again and write what it was that I originally intended to write. They have not understood my experience. Shall I write about this experience, and in so doing be at once struck by an awareness of something like a gap between what I write and what it was I wanted to write? The question and the circle point to some observations. It is immediately clear to me that any expectation I might have had that, by writing, I could exactly express my 'view' in words, is an expectation which will be frustrated. I am reminded, by contrast, of conversations with others in which I have found what I took then to be 'better' descriptions of what I wanted to say. (I use the scare quotes to indicate an awareness that the terms so marked call out for further analysis or perhaps for further description - a call that,

for reasons already under consideration, will not always be answered.) I am also reminded, that by playing with what Burke calls the 'four major tropes' I am able, from time to time, to arrive more closely at what I had intended, or hoped, to write. These observations lead towards some tentative conclusions or, perhaps better, hypotheses for further inspection. For example, I may be said to be the victim of a kind of illusion, perhaps 'mirage' is closer or, even better, a 'family of illusions'. At a further level of reflection I notice that I am comfortably using metaphors, 'mirage' and 'family' to reach closer to what it is that I think I want to say. And I am 'comfortable' about it, I notice as the metaphors begin to support one another.

In writing this I am aware of many difficulties, one concerns my lack of expertise in many of the writers I wish to use. I have arrived at a compromise which I hope might serve two purposes. I shall use a combination of original writers, in translation where necessary, together with recognized secondary authorities. What I am trying to describe, that is, how I now regard metaphor and its work, is a product of reflection carried out in a combination of observation of a school, and the reading of previous writers. What parts may have been played by the previous writer I am anxious to acknowledge, *whether my understanding accords with previous reading by others or not*. But I wish to be as clear as I can be, as to how the view I am trying to describe stands in relation to previous writers. This intention stands, even though I am unable, in the end, to say whether my view has been discovered or invented. Even although it matters not a jot by which of these routes the new description is arrived at.

Earlier, I alluded to those others whom I imagine to be reading what I write and encouraging me to do differently. These imagined others play an important role for me. It isn't that I first sit down and decide, as all the best manuals suggest, who my 'audience' is, though this is probably an important related tactic. It is rather that I am strongly influenced by the many experiences of conversation and by the recognition of having arrived at a more satisfying description of the topic during the process. There is then a tension for me in writing this thesis, that I do so alone when I believe that it would be better done in conversation. Perhaps I can find some ways of easing this tension? Would it help to find some analogues of the processes of successful conversation? What might they be? Several possibilities arise. I remember my own rule for myself, which is to use the first-person personal pronoun "I" in statements, to speak for myself

rather than attempt to speak for the rest of world. It sets up fewer claims that will later need to be withdrawn, or much qualified. The style of contributions, should be made in the form of a gift, not demanding a price; gifts, reciprocal or not, highlighting a quality of intimacy between the members. Suggestions should be made as openly as possible and with the courtesy of 'invitation'. Popper's phrase 'conjectures and refutations' seems appropriate as a way of describing some aspects of helpful conversation<sup>1</sup>. I should therefore try to write in such a way as to invite, and easily enable, refutation, a practice which sits uncomfortably with the rhetoric of 'persuading', of 'examination' and 'defence'. A further tension arises, in the context of the seriousness of academic theses and their regulation, I notice that much conversation has the flavour of 'play'. Should this writing exhibit features of play?

Having committed myself to the two preceding paragraphs, I notice a number of themes which I already link strongly with metaphor. That it has the character of 'play', that it acts as 'invitation', that 'intimacy' is part of the ecology both of conversation and metaphor. That the initiation and identification of metaphor, concerned with the interplay of similarity and difference, are the analogues of 'conjecture and refutation'. As the list grows, the boundaries of conversation and tropes melt, if not into air, at least into each other. But I am running ahead of myself. I have chosen five main writers to help me describe and justify my present views. They are Aristotle, Vico, Hobbes, Nietzsche and Rorty. Let me start with Aristotle.

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<sup>1</sup> Popper's own uses for these terms were themselves conceived as parts of critical conversation, on the back of his view that there was no final truth in science (Popper 1959).

# Chapter 1

## In Relation to Aristotle

*In this subject it is better to make a mistake that can be exposed than to do nothing, better to have any account of how metaphor works (or thought goes on) than to have none. Provided always that we do not suppose that our account really tells us what happens - provided, that is, we do not mistake our theories for our skill, or our descriptive apparatus for what it describes.*

Richards, I. A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* 1936: 115

Let me start with Aristotle. But, of course, I cannot. I have to start with David Lambourn on one autumn morning in 1999, simply because my view of Aristotle's view of metaphor is a perspective influenced by my reading, writing and conversation during the last four years. This reading has included the later writing of Richard Rorty, from *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (Rorty 1980) and, in particular, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (CIS) (Rorty 1989). This link with metaphor has helped me to see pragmatist writing as an alternative to the, largely British, empirical tradition into which I had previously been inducted. How will I tell you about that? Let me start with Aristotle. But, of course, I cannot.

Let this small circle stand for many and much larger and, on occasion, interlinked circles: circles which have been an intimate part of my reading, at once exciting and frustrating, from the beginning of this study, a study born of my own curiosity. There will be other circles in this writing, circles which may excite and frustrate both reader and writer, circles which may be travelled with further curiosity.

**All men by nature desire to know?**

I have already spoken of my curiosity as the starting point of my study. Aristotle may be read as making the more general point at the opening of his *Metaphysics*:

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer sight to almost everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light so many differences between things." (*Metaphysics 1i.e.*)  
(Aristotle 1984: 98021-7)

Seen through the rear-view mirror of epistemology, this is taken by many as a statement about humans and knowledge as, for example, does Lear, "Aristotle is attributing to us a desire, a force, which urges us on toward knowledge." (Lear 1988: 1). Seen as an example of work by a writer who, in some respects, is like me, if I try to see this 'as-if' Descartes had not been, I have a somewhat different view. Let me try to convey this - another of the many, and misleading, metaphors in this area. One aspect of Aristotle's style is that he is respectful of earlier writing and is also keen so to introduce his subject, or problem, that it will become clear when it has been achieved, or solved. He had a motto to the effect that unless the problem was first stated, we would not know when a solution had been arrived at. Perhaps he was doing this here. The words "All men by nature desire to know", may be read either as conclusion, or as assumption, but if we follow Aristotle's normal practice, we will regard it as something for which he will now argue. We could divide his sentence into, albeit arbitrary, parts: 'All men', 'by nature', 'desire to know'. In adding 'by nature' to 'All men', Aristotle manages to suggest that he speaks of something shared by all, that is a common facility, simply the case by virtue of being human, but he also manages to leave a space for vagueness. His statement is not unequivocal about the extent to which 'all men' might be determined by the eventual predicate. We should not regard vagueness as a deficit. Vagueness undertakes or, if you prefer, allows, many important steps<sup>1</sup>. For the moment, let us simply recognise that Aristotle has raised the issue of the relation of the senses and knowledge, of what is fundamental to human experience, and that he leaves as vague any boundaries between nature and culture.

Should we follow Lear both in understanding Aristotle to be "attributing to us a desire, a force, which urges us on toward knowledge...", and also in accepting this for ourselves, as does he: "It is this desire that is responsible for your reading and my writing this book" (p. 1)? I take Lear to be over-influenced by our Cartesian heritage, he moves too quickly (or perhaps too far?) towards

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1 Vagueness is treated further at page 147ff.



knowledge. A slightly different view might be that, as I shall later be suggesting in more detail, he overlooks the context of action when speaking about knowledge. By contrast, I am more content with the lesser claim, asserted by Aristotle, of "the delight we take in our senses" - drawing our attention to the active, to 'natural' curiosity. Lear, though, is sensible of the centrality of curiosity. "From earliest childhood humans display an innate curiosity. Indeed the British psychologist Melanie Klein once called this childhood curiosity episteophilia - love of episteme." (M. Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation* e.g. pp. 87, 188, 190-1, 227-8, 426 & 429.) Doesn't Klein's choice of term similarly betray the over-influence of Descartes? Lear, however, is not content to leave it there. He continues:

But curiosity is not, I believe, the best way to conceptualize what drives men on. Perhaps it is better to think of man's natural capacity to be puzzled. We tend to take this capacity for granted. Yet it is a remarkable fact about us that we cannot simply observe phenomena: we want to know why they occur (Lear 1988: 30).

Lear moves too quickly. He seems over-anxious to arrive at the desire for knowledge as the answer to the question of "what drives men on(?)". He would leave more options open were he to regard his conclusion that "we want to know why they occur" as simply an observation of yet another example of our curiosity.<sup>1</sup> We should notice, in passing, that Lear has already dropped a serious hint as to his view of Nietzsche:

If the knowledge we pursued were merely a means to a further end, say, power over others or control of the environment, then our innate desire would not be a desire for knowledge. It would be a will to power or an obsessional drive for control. (Lear 1988: 1)

In what he next writes:

But the world does not grab us by the throat and yank us out of the cave. There must be something in us that drives us to take advantage of the world's structure. (Lear 1988: 1)

his own rhetoric, instanced here by a move to a lexicon of physical violence - we should beware the narrator who changes metaphors(es) in midstream - betrays an anxiety. There seem to be some points to be made here about Lear's assumptions. He has an assumption about the distance

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<sup>1</sup> In his story of the metaphor of life as *Shipwreck with Spectator*, Blumenberg spends some time on the notion of curiosity. He refers to Voltaire's article in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* and says of Voltaire "that it is only curiosity that makes people stand on the beach and watch a ship in peril at sea." Of curiosity, Blumenberg remarks that "This passion alone drives men to climb trees in order to observe the bloodbath of a battle or a public hanging. And it is not a human passion but one we share with apes and puppies." (Blumenberg 1997: 36) Blumenberg would be unsurprised by Bower (See page 20).

of the human from the natural, a strange perception post-Darwin.<sup>1</sup> This distance, of course, makes it the more comfortable to adopt the quasi-mechanical view (metaphor? model?) of the human - he writes of "something in us that drives us" which encourages him to search for the mechanism. The subject of Lear's study does not, as Lear does, carry Descartes<sup>2</sup> around on his back. Aristotle's thoughts on 'the desire to know' are embedded in a concern for the sustaining and the development of the culture. His examples are drawn from the social-economic arrangements of *techné*.

With a view to action experience seems in no respect inferior to art, and we even see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience.  
(Aristotle 1984: 981a13)

His arguments are set in the context of the empirical judgements made about the different values placed upon the master-workers and the manual labourers. Perhaps Lear should be encouraged to adopt a similar approach rather than set up models and categories subject to Occam's objections. By his already declared interest in the evident curiosity of the young, Lear allows us to introduce an alternative description, an empirical study by T. R Bower, which I reproduce here at some length.

Consider an infant in a situation in which he can turn on a light by turning his head to the left. Most infants of two to three months will succeed in turning on the light several times within quite a short time. Their rate of leftward head-turning will then drop back to level which is insufficient to serve as a criterion of learning. The rate will not pick up again so long as the left-turn-light-on contingency is operative. Suppose that the experimenter changes the contingency right-turn-light-on. Sooner or later the infant will make a left turn and the light will not go on. We then see a burst of leftward head turns, followed by detection of the right-turn-light-on contingency, as shown by a brief, high rate of head-turns, which will then subside. That rate, too, will stay low if the contingency is unchanged.

If, however, the contingency is changed again to a left-turn followed by a right-turn to switch the light on, the rate of right-turning will increase after the first trial on which the light does not go on, the rate of left-turning will also increase, and finally the child will produce a left-turn followed by a right-turn and switch the light on. After a brief burst of left-rights the rate will subside, until the contingency is changed. The change produces a burst of activity, ending when the correct combination of movements is discovered. Infants have been taught to master quite complex

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1 Aristotle, together with his near-contemporaries, seems not to place a great distance between man and nature. He seems not to distinguish that gap as much as that between those who have, or have not, had the fortune to have been born as members of a polis.

2 Some will object to my somewhat derogatory use of Descartes. A more sympathetic view has been put forward by Colin Turbayne, who portrays him as having been at least partly aware of the metaphorical character of his use of geometry. (Turbayne 1971)

series of movements, such as right-right-left-left, in such procedures. Every time the contingency is changed the rate goes up.

Examination of the behaviour shows that the activity is not random. The infants seem to be testing hypotheses, trying out sequences of movements to discover which one operates at the moment. It thus seems that the pleasures of problem solving are sufficient to motivate behavioural and mental activity in these young infants....

Perhaps the most shocking thing about results like these is the remarkable capacity displayed by the infant subjects. Problem-solving, hypothesis-testing, learning for its own sake, are not phrases that we associate with infants. (Bower 1971: 30-8)

This account by Bower has been very influential for me and in a variety of ways. It carries an immediate implication, which we may mark here before elaborating later, in that we may take Bower to have described an activity which it would be acceptable to ascribe to Nature *rather than* to Culture, though I take the relationship to be an interactive one, such that it would be very difficult to divide it between these two claimants. For the time being, I would like simply to attach the word 'interactive' to describe the child's relationship between perception and action. Later, with Gadamer, Wittgenstein and Davidson, in particular, we shall return to account for a particular view of language.

Further, we may remind ourselves that in the body of his text Bower concluded that "It thus seems that the *pleasures* of problem solving are sufficient to motivate behavioural and mental activity in these young infants...." (*emphasis added*). With the benefit of this description, and in particular Bower's use here of "pleasure", we are returned to where we started with Aristotle and his "delight", but no longer with any need to follow Lear to his own particular conclusion about an apparently context-free desire for knowledge, nor any longer being saddled with a very non-Darwinian distance between Man and Nature.

There is one other point to mark here. It has to do with the myelination of the human cortex. The axons of the cortex are, so to speak 'in place' at birth, but incompletely developed in one important respect. The sheathing of myelin, effectively an insulator, is all but absent. The immediate consequence of this is that the axons of the cortex are 'silent'. The myelination develops over a period of time at around six months of age, only then enabling the passage of signals along axons. The typical consequence of this is that the cortical axons have the effect of inhibiting the working of the earlier brain - this is said to account for various skills, present at birth, being

lost if not practised during this period - walking, swimming etc. Which is to say that there would appear to be grounds for supposing that there is some interference with 'inherited' competences. One of the typical effects of the interaction of the firing of axons upon another, is known as 'inhibition'. The typical result of the connection of the newer cortical cells upon the earlier material is first one of inhibition, and then allowing the possibility of learning to take place.<sup>1</sup>

### **Aristotle famously ambivalent about metaphor ?**

To begin to explore in a little more detail, we might examine a writing by Moran, who opens a paper on metaphor in *The Rhetoric*, with a reference to the pre-Socratic period and introduces us to metaphor as "itself a rhetorical weapon", a (metaphorical) description which helps to focus on the uses of metaphor, but does not escape the mould of an ontological description. Later, though, he makes an explicit reference to the uses of metaphor:

As the first philosopher to direct sustained theoretical attention to the specific workings of metaphor, Aristotle is famously ambivalent about its power and appropriateness in philosophy. He will sometimes charge other philosophers (i.e... Plato) with failing to provide genuine explanations, and instead dealing in "empty words and poetical metaphors," and he asserts categorically in the *Topics* (139b34) that "everything is unclear (*asaphes*) that is said by metaphor." ... And in fact, when he comes to consider metaphor in the *Rhetoric* (1405a8) he claims for it the special virtue of being clear (*saphes*), ascribing to it the very quality (and "to a high degree") which he withheld from metaphor altogether in the *Topics*. (Moran 1996: 386)

It will seem odd, perhaps even perverse, to challenge Moran's description of Aristotle as "famously ambivalent", in the face of such evidence - and Moran adds more of a like kind - but I do. From my perspective of trying to keep metaphor at the centre, Aristotle is no more ambivalent about metaphor than surgeons are ambivalent about scalpels. Metaphor is to be seen as a tool, which does a variety of work, in a variety of contexts. It is not, in my view, simply coincidental that Aristotle treats it, and values it, differently in different contexts. It might be objected here that in describing metaphor as a tool, I thereby adopt a metaphorical description, and that, in addition, this is to begin an ontology, rather than a consideration of the uses, of metaphor. In defence, I hope that it will be regarded as acceptable that the noun 'tool' serves to

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger, rearranging deck chairs, will introduce a programmatic definition for metaphysics such that it will then include metaphor, or perhaps the concept of metaphor, as a way of recovering philosophy from the attack by Nietzsche. This re-definition may be seen as based upon the combination of the development of the human cortex and the late development of the myelination. See footnote on Arendt on page 20.

point to uses, and that this is simply an acceptable Wittgensteinian use.<sup>1</sup>

I do not object to the notion that writers on metaphor express ambivalence. That metaphor provokes reactions which are probably well described in terms of ambivalence is understandable as a reaction to most metaphors which are, at a first hearing, simply false or nonsense. I am content to couple ambivalence together with vagueness and metaphor, for the time being, without further elaboration. Moran's example, above, I read as Aristotle having different jobs for metaphor to do, not an example of ambivalence to towards metaphor. Further, Aristotle is aware that others will set metaphor to do work which Aristotle would prefer was not accomplished. We use weapons for our defence, they use them for attack.

Having now given reasons for not reading him pre-loaded with the assumption that he is "famously ambivalent" about metaphor, we may now approach what Aristotle wrote a little more openly.

### **Aristotle's uses for metaphor**

Stepping closer, let us look at some of Aristotle's writing on metaphor:

metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy. (Poetics 1457b7-9)<sup>2</sup>

The terms 'genus' and 'species' do rather more general work for Aristotle than they do for us, confining them, as we do for the most part, to the lexicon of knowledge as taxonomy. Aristotle's examples illustrate this:

That from genus to species is exemplified in 'Here stands my ship'; for lying at anchor is a form of standing. That from species to genus in 'Truly ten thousand good deeds has Ulysses wrought', where 'ten thousand', which is a particular large number, is put in the place of the generic 'a large number'. That from species to species in 'Drawing the life with the bronze,' and

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- 1 My description of metaphor as 'tool' should not be taken as a reference to Arendt's concern with the possible functions of machine tools, to whom we might relate as master or slave. (Arendt, 1998) (for example p. 151ff.) My concern here is to begin a vocabulary linking metaphor to action rather than to knowledge. Though an analogy with Arendt's concerns may be drawn, insofar as I contend that blindness to metaphor raises again the problematic of master and slave in an important way.
  - 2 This description is limited to those metaphors in which one term is said to be metaphorical. Mark Johnson comments that: "It is with this famous definition that the troubled life of metaphor begins. First, the metaphoric transfer is located at the level of words, rather than sentences. ... Second, metaphor is understood as a device from literal usage... The third corner of this fateful triangle is that metaphor is said to be based on similarities between two things. (Johnson 1981: 5-6) The 'troubled life' was one of significantly more than two thousand years. Roger White provides something of a corrective by remarking that "Fortunately, it has been (Aristotle's) practice and not his stultifying definition, that has turned out to be normative for the subsequent history." (White 1996: 10)

in 'Severing with the enduring bronze'; when the poet uses 'draw' in the sense of 'sever' and 'sever' in that of 'draw', both words meaning to 'take away' something. [Poetics: 1457b9-11]

The transfer from genus to species and *vice versa* identify what would become known in later rhetoric as synecdoche, used to elaborate the relations between the attributes of parts to the whole. His comments alert us to the one of the overlooked values of a classificatory system. Every example of what Ryle calls a category mistake, is potentially a metaphor (Ryle 1949: 17). From the point of view of trying to keep metaphor at the centre, we may reverse the usually perceived relationship and see the value of clear categories as providing the possibility of new metaphor, the possibility of new ideas. Classification is potentially generative.

It is in this section of *The Poetics* that Aristotle sets out the common school exercise on analogy:

That from analogy is possible whenever there are four terms so related that the second is to the first as the fourth to the third; for one may then put the fourth in place of the second, and the second in the place of the fourth. (Poetics: 1457b16-18)

Aristotle points to an occasional link between analogy and metaphor in which he offers a more subtle connection between metaphor and analogy than that of the former being merely a container for the latter:

Now and then, too, they qualify the metaphor by adding on to it that to which the word it supplants is relative. Thus a cup is in relation to Dionysus what a shield is to Ares. The cup accordingly will be described as the 'shield of Dionysus' and the shield as the 'cup of Ares'. Or to take another instance: As old age is to life, so is evening to day. (Poetics: 1457b19-24)

These observations on metaphor are embedded into a section on *onomata*, normally translated as 'nouns', but doing work more generally as well, and several writers make the point that Aristotle's discussion, if that is what it is, of metaphor is confined to nouns. In support of this comment we may offer one of his more widely known remarks:

...strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of new ideas. (Rhetoric III: 1410b)

in which he seems not to recognize "convey" as a metaphor and is therefore unable to question it. This particular metaphor might be responsible for significant illusion. Aristotle, for the most part, may be taken to understand metaphor at the level of the word, rather than the sentence, or at the level of utterance or even of discourse. Ricoeur comments on this:

Certainly, confining metaphor among *word-focused figures of speech* will give rise to an extreme refinement in taxonomy. It will, however, carry a high price: it becomes impossible to recognize a certain homogenous functioning that (as Roman Jakobson will show) ignores the difference between word and discourse and operates at all the strategic levels of language - words, sentences, discourse, texts, styles. (Ricoeur 1978: 16-7)

Some will read Aristotle, as being somewhat, if not 'famously', ambivalent in some of his uses of metaphor:

And to say that they (Plato's Forms) are patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors. (Metaphysics 991a21, see also 1079 b26)

Other places, other uses. We would be required to construe the phrase 'poetical metaphors' as a pejorative term here, but its task, perhaps even its accomplishment, is a significant one, and may be read in either of two ways. On the one hand, it could be that Aristotle sent "poetic metaphor" to undermine what had been seen as the basis of Plato's synthesis. On the other, it could be construed as an invitation to treat Plato's thinking as entirely based upon metaphor - a wholly laudable enterprise from my point of view. I concede, however, that the co-presence of the phrase "empty words" goes some way to render this second reading the less likely to be that intended.

Plato, Aristotle's most significant precursor, is the one to whom Aristotle owes most, and is at the same time the one from whom he must distinguish himself, from whom he must 'swerve'. By swerve here I follow the literary critic, Harold Bloom (Bloom 1997). Halliwell begins to identify this:

What Aristotle does assert, against Plato, is that poetry should not be subjected to simple and direct evaluation in terms of external criteria - moral, political or otherwise. Plato assessed art by the unqualified application of the canons of truth and goodness, so that art was wholly subsumed within the jurisdiction of his ethical and political philosophy (as well as his metaphysics). It is independence from such unmitigated moralism and didacticism which Aristotle's recognition of poetry's intrinsic qualities stands for. (Halliwell 1986: 4)

Consider then the effect of Aristotle's description of Plato's forms as "poetical metaphor". For Plato's followers it would entail construing the basis of Plato's thinking as dependent upon his ethics and politics, which would have the effect of constructing a vicious circle, so undermining the work. From the point of view of trying to keep metaphor at the centre, the result of this interaction between Aristotle and Plato gives us an example, not to be succinctly expressed for a further two millennia, of the view found in Nietzsche. Metaphor is the device/process, or

reification of the same, which lies at the centre of the social, the forum of community. (I, too, wish to take advantage of vagueness from time to time.)

Damning the basis of his teacher's thinking by construing it as "poetic metaphor", and seeming at the same time to equate such metaphors with "empty words" leaves me the task of defending my earlier disinclination to regard Aristotle as "famously ambivalent" about metaphor, to which accusation the following extract seems only to add further evidence:

The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor.... This alone cannot be imparted to another: it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances." [Poetics 1459a5-8]

But I stay with my decision. Although this extract has attracted varying comment, it seems justifiable to take it as speaking not of metaphor but of 'the *command* of metaphor' which cannot be imparted to another. It is the *command* of metaphor which is the mark of genius. Then Aristotle, uses (I nearly wrote 'resorts to') a degree of vagueness when he links the making of good metaphors and "an eye for resemblances." This vagueness is important, for the reasons that Quine and others give<sup>1</sup>. Here Aristotle is able to link "an eye for resemblances" (a further metaphor) with language, without having to say exactly what that relation is. In this way of reading Aristotle, we can see here the value of vagueness as itself performing the work of metaphor.

It is, indeed, tempting to add together these last three extracts to try to identify metaphor more clearly. Halliwell may be taken as doing this when he links references to metaphor in the *Poetics*, and the *Metaphysics* to the *Rhetoric*:

Although metaphor can be analytically examined and classified, as it is in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*, it clearly remains resistant, in Aristotle's eyes, to a 'technical' understanding.

It is only in the case of metaphor that we sense a complete harmony of meaning and style in Aristotle's view of language. The reason for this is that metaphor, although it *can* be regarded as a stylistic ornament alongside other types, is valued by the philosopher as a unique means of expressing certain perceptions. As Rhet. 1410b 10ff explains, it is metaphor above all which communicates understanding and insight (whether serious or humorous) by indissoluble linguistic means. (Halliwell 1986: 349)

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion see page 147ff.



Although Aristotle did examine metaphor, both in the *Poetics* and in the *Rhetoric*, and made proposals as to its classification - it seems to have resisted understanding as *tekne* - there is no need for an ontology. Rather, from my perspective, it is more helpful to notice that Aristotle has not set out a definitive statement about metaphor, and to conclude that (1) he could have done so had he wanted, or that (2) he did and it hasn't survived, or that (3) there might well be good reason why he did not. I have no way to decide those issues, but I do find it more enlightening (useful?) to regard metaphor as one of Aristotle's tools (itself a metaphor) for which he had a variety of uses, and that it is these uses to which we should attend. When Aristotle transforms the noun metaphor into a verb 'metaphorize' he is not concerned to draw attention to this change of status, he has simply put his earlier term to another use, or rather created the possibility of a variety of other uses. This judgement, that it is to the uses and work of metaphor to which we should attend, is one to which I shall return repeatedly hereafter.

Before passing to the next section, a note on metaphor as a tool and another note on jokes or riddles. Whilst I have previously described metaphor as a tool-making tool in the context of research into teaching in higher education (Lambourn 1980) we should enter a caveat on metaphors as tools, based upon some remarks by Gadamer:

The interpreter does not use words and concepts like a craftsman who picks up his tools and then puts them away. Rather, we must recognize that all understanding is interwoven with concepts and reject any theory that does not accept the intimate unity of word and subject matter. (Gadamer 1965: 403)

The tools (words) do not remain unchanged overnight as do the craftsman's tools! The tools are re-shaped with each usage. Aristotle links riddles with metaphor:

Good riddles do, in general, provide us with satisfactory metaphors; for metaphors imply riddles, and therefore a good riddle can furnish a good metaphor. (*Rhetoric*: 1405b3-6)

This observation seems not to have been developed, unless it was by Ted Cohen in 1979, and not, as far as I am aware, linked with Nietzsche's *Truth and Lies*, and not since. (Cohen 1979)

Moran points out that the examples of metaphor use which Aristotle gives would, in many cases, be thought of rather differently in our time, "usages of this sort would be thought of as perfectly literal or at least as belonging to some other category than the metaphorical" (Moran 1996: 386). "Nonetheless", he continues, "the conceptual relation is close enough to make Aristotle's

problems ours." In so doing, he establishes an uncertainty as to his interests in what is to follow. Noting that "most contemporary philosophical discussion has treated metaphor as a problem in the philosophy of language and centred on the question of whether there is or is not such a thing as specifically 'metaphorical meaning,' and if so, how it is related to literal meaning", he declares these not to be Aristotle's problems. Aristotle's problems are said to be the rhetorical uses. Moran elaborates:

How does a metaphor *persuade*, what qualities specific to it enable it to play such a role, and how do its workings compare with those of explicit, literal argument? To what extent is metaphor a legitimate vehicle of understanding, and to what extent does its rhetorical usefulness depend on a lack of understanding, on the part of its audience, about its functioning? (Moran 1996: 386)

Moran reminds us:

Nonetheless, being pleasing (*hedu*) is one of the three primary virtues assigned to metaphor, the other two being lucidity (*saphes*), as mentioned, and strangeness (*xenikon*) (1405a8). (Moran 1996: 387)

We have already come across the value which Aristotle puts on 'being pleasing' as a criterion for his view of the naturalness of desiring to know. Trying to hold metaphor at the centre, I wonder whether we might reverse the perceptions here, and ask whether some of our experiences of pleasure, lucidity and strangeness derive, in some way, originally from the processes we name as metaphor? Might not the work of metaphor, or in generosity to Aristotle, "an eye for resemblances," be the more primary experience from which we develop our experience of lucidity and strangeness, and perhaps even of pleasure? These questions will arise later, in the writings of Vico and Gadamer on the primacy of metaphor.

"Although our understanding of the art of rhetoric has its origins in Aristotle's analysis of the craft, we need to approach his account cautiously." So Paul Ricoeur (Ricoeur 1996: 324).

Heidegger, from a different perspective, gives us reason:

Contrary to the traditional orientation, according to which rhetoric is conceived as the kind of thing we 'learn in school', this work of Aristotle must be taken as the first systematic hermeneutic of the everydayness of Being with one another." (Heidegger 1962: 178)

For the time being, I will understand that as something akin to a description of the *Rhetoric* as the first modern work of social theory. This should probably be understood as '*avant la lettre*' in the sense that I take 'modern' to be used in post-Reformation sensibility.

The root of *metaphora* is that of a transfer, and for Aristotle:

Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy. (Poetics: 1457b)

Many writers on metaphor have started with references to *On Rhetoric* and to *The Poetics*. They have varied in their treatment of Aristotle, and their approach to metaphor is often reflected in their approach to his writing. Some are explicitly cautious, as was Ricoeur, above. Others champion him, as does Heidegger:

What has escaped notice is that the basic ontological interpretation of the affective life in general has been able to make scarcely one forward step worthy of mention since Aristotle. (Heidegger 1962: 178)

Fiumara sets up a contrast with Plato, seeing Aristotle as more “‘physiologically’ inclined than his predecessor”, and continues:

Thus the naturalist philosopher, reacting to Platonic transcendence, insists that our metaphoric potential is, by far, 'the greatest thing' in language - indeed a sign of 'genius' for creativity and survival." (Fiumara 1995: 1)

The inclusion of 'for creativity and survival', absent from any immediate context in Aristotle, should be regarded simply as Fiumara's gloss, however supportive it might be of the view which I wish to elaborate.

Much of what Aristotle had to say was in praise of metaphor. Plato had had sufficient doubts about the value of metaphor - he seems to have understood it as offering an aesthetic quality allied to the mnemonic structuring of the oral tradition, and he barred poets from his Republic. Aristotle, by contrast, found uses for metaphor, not only in politics where rhetoric enabled a man to be heard effectively in public, but also in law, where juries were suspicious of evidence which could be faked, and witnesses who could be bribed.

There are differences in the several writings in which Aristotle considers metaphor, differences which are for the most part glossed over by others. I take the view that however committed writers may be to valuing clarity, they are unlikely to be as clear about metaphor as they are about the more concrete items which they distinguish. Further, that it is acceptable, perhaps even inevitable, that this should be the case. Attempts to write an ontology of metaphor have, from my perspective, misled those writers who have identified the scattered references to metaphor in Aristotle and simply attempted to add them together.

For present purposes, the subsequent history of metaphor until the end of the Renaissance may best be understood as part of the history of rhetoric.

### A note on visual metaphors

Before leaving Aristotle for the battleground of the Renaissance, I would like briefly to entertain a matter which has nagged at me throughout my preparations. It is convenient to return to Moran who ventures the claim that, in *The Rhetoric*:

It is no exaggeration to say that the primary virtue of metaphor is for Aristotle the ability to set something vividly before the eyes of the audience (*pro ommaton poiein*) (1410b34). (Moran 1996: 392)

I am sympathetic to Moran's claim here, and I would have done better to have identified, at a much earlier stage, the possibility of writing a parallel thesis to this simply in order to prevent 'interference' with the present one. Expressed briefly, there is a well-known major strand of, mainly British, writing on the links between language and perception which has been explicit at least since Locke's *Essay*, especially the second edition into which he inserted the contents of a letter he had received from a correspondent in Dublin, after whom the matter has been referred to as Molyneux's Question.<sup>1</sup> The matters touched upon are many and should appear at various points in the present thesis were there not constraints as to its length.

Aristotle's metaphor for metaphor, the setting of something vividly before the eyes of another, may be taken as a convenient starting point for the relation of language to perception<sup>2</sup>. The circularity is complete. To my way of thinking this suggests that an account from within biology and psychology would be appropriate but, given the institutionalised structure of what is taken for knowledge, not one to be entertained here, even though such conclusions as may accompany the present thesis would suggest that the place of metaphor and conversation comprise

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1 Molyneux's question asked:

"Suppose a man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a cube and sphere of the same metal. Suppose then the cube and sphere were placed on a table, and the blind man made to distinguish and tell which was the globe and which the cube?" (Cited by Gregory, 1973: 192)

The question was treated by Locke and later by Berkeley. An analogy may be drawn between the experience of an adult learning to see for the first time and that of a child learning to see, raising issues as to the part played by the contemporaneous language learning.

2 Interestingly, from my point of view, Aristotle goes on to elaborate the consequences of 'setting something before the eyes'. The purpose is to 'represent things as in a state of activity' (1411b 25).

something approaching both necessary and sufficient conditions for the development of natural science. We may, however, with some justification, simply take the view that the same brain processes which enable metaphor, also enable the human experience of seeing - much being owed to parsimony in the theory of evolution.

Locke's account of perception served to obfuscate by using the same terms both for perception and for thought and, in so doing, may be thought either to be concealing the use of metaphor or, perhaps better, not to have realised the extent that he was using metaphor. The story of empiricism may be told in these terms<sup>1</sup>.

I proffer these remarks as an indication that, although I have restricted this writing to metaphor in its linguistic manifestations, it could as easily have included a study from within the visual arts, Ernst Gombrich being a major contributor, perhaps best known, in this respect, for his study *Art and Illusion* (Gombrich 1960). Part of Gombrich's contribution being a demonstration of how a painter sees in terms of a previous painter's work - an analogue of Harold Bloom's writing in *The Anxiety of Influence*. (Bloom 1997)<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle, then, provides us with so rich a seam when seeking starting points for a discussion of metaphor, providing that we resist the temptation to suppose that we may construct an ontology. Such a conclusion will help to support claims to be made later, arising from contributions in particular from Vico and Davidson.

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1 J. D. Law in *The Rhetoric of Empiricism: Language and Perception from Locke to I. A. Richards* (Law 1993) has begun such a description.

2 Eve Kittay further extends the possibilities:

In exploring metaphor as a phenomenon of language, I do not mean to claim that metaphor is found only in language nor that metaphor is merely linguistic. We can have metaphor in dance, in painting, in music in film, or in any other expressive medium. (Kittay 1987: 14)

## Chapter 2

### In Relation to Hobbes

*But to profit we must remember, with Hobbes, that "the scope of all speculation is the performance of some action or thing to be done" and, with Kant, that "We can by no means require of the pure practical reason to be subordinated to the speculative, and thus to reverse the order, since every interest is at last practical, and even that of the speculative reason is but conditional, and is complete only in its practical use.*

Richards, I. A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* p. 95.

If, when I originally proposed to set out on this project, I had been told of the imminent publication by Quentin Skinner of *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, (Skinner 1996)<sup>1</sup> I would probably have abandoned my proposal. Skinner has a seriousness of interest in the place of language in the writing of history which fatally undermines Whiggish accounts. His choice of subject could also hardly be of more personal interest, given that some of Hobbes' lines had remained an irritant for me, for some two decades, giving rise to the suggestion of resistance to metaphor. I choose Hobbes also on the ground that he lives in the complex times of early modernity of which the following is a brief sketch.

Give or take a matter of months, Hobbes was 8 at the birth of Descartes, 15 at the death of Elizabeth I and the accession of James I, 28 at the death of Shakespeare, 37 at the accession of Charles I, 38 at the death of Francis Bacon - to whom he had been sometime secretary, translator and amanuensis, 44 at the birth of John Locke, 54 at the publication of his *De Cive* which brought him to some international recognition, which also saw the start of the Civil War, the death of Galileo and the birth of Isaac Newton, he was 61 at the execution of Charles I, 62 at the death of Descartes, 63 at the publication of the English version of *Leviathan*, 72 at the Restoration and still

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, references by page number alone are to (Skinner 1996).

lived some further twenty years, dying at 91. Hobbes lived during a period of rapid and complex change in Europe, and the description of contemporary understandings of rhetoric, which constitutes the first part of Skinner's study, serves to set out many of the intellectual tools available at that time, and does so in such a way as to enable attempted comparisons with the present - a use, nevertheless, deprecated by Skinner. I qualify the possibility of such comparisons, simply to register the difficulties which surround such attempts. To anticipate Vico and Herder, we might know the vocabularies of an earlier period, we might know something of their etymologies, we might know something of the stories they and their descendants told of those times, but it is another matter to suppose that we can 'get inside their heads'. One of the many merits of *Reason and Rhetoric*, from my point of view, is that by first describing those aspects of the culture, literary and political and scientific, and then placing Hobbes' life and development and changes within it, Skinner provides a case-study, or model, as it were, for us to be able to examine our own relations to rhetoric and 'civill science'.

In appropriating Hobbes and offering qualifications in order to describe or arrive at my view of metaphor, I approach him through Skinner's redescrptions. As my main interest is to consider the relation of metaphor etc. to social theory in the present, I am more than content, in this chapter, to draw heavily on *Reason and Rhetoric* and to treat it, for my purposes, as a standard work which, I imagine, it will remain for some time to come. Tools may, however, be somewhat re-fashioned the better to suit their new tasks, so I shall offer questions and qualifications to Skinner's work as I bend selections from it to my purposes.

Skinner's overall thesis is complex. His view begins with Hobbes' education within a humanist ethos, develops through a period in which he was much influenced by the centrality of science and geometry and within which he came to reject much of the humanist perceptions, and is followed by a return, in the *Leviathan*, to a more integrated view which valued figurative language positively. In addition, Skinner argues that Hobbes was interested throughout to write on the creation of a 'civill science'. My irritation, associated with Hobbes' remarks on metaphor, turns out to have been an artifact of my own creation, one brought about by not having set my

reading of *Leviathan* within a context of either the ethos of the period, nor yet within the context of Hobbes' own other writing. Worse (or is it better?), I can now, as a result, safely choose Hobbes to play in my team.

The humanist ethos drew largely upon Cicero's *De inventione*. Skinner comments:

Cicero's conclusion is therefore that there are two indispensable components to the idea of *scientia civilis*. One is reason, the faculty that enables us to uncover the truth. The other is rhetoric, the art that enables us to present the truth with eloquence. The need for rhetoric stems from the fact that, as Cicero repeatedly emphasises, reason lacks any inherent capacity to persuade us of the truths it brings to light.. (p. 2)

Skinner's argument includes a view of Hobbes as proceeding "to pull up his humanist roots' (p. 3) when he begins to write on *scientia civilis* in *The Elements* and *De Cive*. Skinner describes Hobbes as maintaining in *The Elements*, that, so long as one reasons aright from premises based in experience, we shall be able not merely to arrive at scientific truths, but to teach and beget in others exactly the same conceptions as we possess ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

Skinner continues:

(Hobbes) denies, however, that it will ever be necessary to employ the arts of persuasion to bring about these results. He insists that persuasion must categorically be distinguished from teaching, and the arts of persuasion have no legitimate place in the process of teaching at all. This is because the methods of *recta ratio*, and hence the procedures of all the genuine sciences, serve in themselves to dictate the acceptance of the truths they find out. They supply us with demonstrations evident to the meanest capacity, giving rise to conclusions that admit of no controversy and cannot possibly be gainsaid (p. 30).<sup>2</sup>

Skinner draws the contrast between the views expressed by Hobbes here in 1640 with those in the English *Leviathan* of a decade later, a decade which Hobbes spent largely in France and to some extent in the company of Descartes' friends and colleagues, if he did not in fact meet Descartes. In the later writing Hobbes acknowledges that the sciences have not the power to persuade by themselves, that if reason is to prevail it will need to be supported by the rhetorical

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1 The idea of 'reasoning aright from premises based in experience' is somewhat difficult to grasp when trying to hold metaphor at the centre. Let us discount, for the moment, any part played by metaphor in an experience enjoyed by A. When A finds herself in a new and strange situation she draws on her previous experience and defines the present situation in terms of the previous. She sees it, in the first place, as she saw the previous experience and is disposed to act accordingly. So much happens so quickly she is probably unaware of the processes. The rabbit seen scampering across the field from the window of the passing train, has become, at second glance, a scrap of newspaper carried by the disturbance of the air caused by the train. There was no time to consider, choose and identify premises. Perhaps slower examples should be used as in the natural sciences. But no matter how slow and deliberate the processes, is there any way to arrive at Truth?

2 This description is based upon Hobbes, 1969: 64-7.



arts, and sets about so doing in the body of his text.

Skinner's interest is to describe texts by trying to identify what their authors were *doing* in writing them. Included in this task is that of "offering a contextual account of what I take to be the central concept in (Hobbes') political theory, that of civil science itself" (p. 7).

### **From Auditors to Spectators: aspects of Rhetoric**

One of the distinctive characteristics of Skinner's writing is that of paying attention to the rhetorical repertoire available to the writer he studies. He therefore begins the main body of his study with a description of the contemporary rhetoric. He begins by noting a change:

The first simplifying move was to declare that there were only four genuine tropes. Omar Talon... at the outset of his *Rhetorica*... goes on to isolate the four tropes alone worthy of the name: metonymy, irony, metaphor and synecdoche. (p. 64) (Skinner is citing Talon, 1631)

The supporting criterion had been stated by Fenner, that these were the sole instances in which "one worde is drawn from his first proper signification to another." (Fenner, 1584) - and we might, in passing, simply notice the anthropomorphism - in such a way as to produce a rhetorical effect. This simplification has since been widely adopted, though not always on the grounds of Fenner's criterion. I will later consider this grouping, in the work of Vico. Fenner's criterion is an interesting one, as it raises, with the benefit of hindsight through Donald Davidson, the possibility of rendering the taken-for-granted understanding of language problematic<sup>1</sup>.

The widespread use of the vocabulary of light and seeing, one which later came to label this period, was already well known among the classical authors, to whom many turned as an alternative source of legitimation to that of the church. Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* several times uses the idea of 'seeing' as a powerful version of knowing or persuading. For example:

It is also good to use metaphorical words; but the metaphors must not be far-fetched, or they will be difficult to grasp, nor obvious, or they will have no effect. The words, too, ought to set the scene before our eyes; for events ought to be seen in progress rather than in prospect. So we must aim at these three points: antithesis, metaphor, and actuality. (1410b32 -34)

Skinner, whose interest at this point is in the metaphor of seeing for knowledge, does not draw attention to the connection, made by Aristotle, that the use of metaphor is most powerful when

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<sup>1</sup> References to language as 'problematic' are generally references to the reification of language, to the tendency of engaging with an ontology of language, rather than, as I prefer, to speak of the abilities we have with noises and marks.

an action is seen as in progress, "rather than in prospect": that the connection is most powerful when identifying *action* rather than *knowledge*. Skinner goes on to remind us that this passage is echoed by Quintillian, who says that metaphors provide an even more powerful means 'of deeply moving the feelings and drawing special attention to things and placing them before our very eyes'. (p. 187) Within the view I am trying to describe, the identification of feelings and emotion further support a linkage between metaphor and action rather than between metaphor and knowledge.

Skinner goes on to provide other examples from the English Renaissance:

When Richard Sherry, for example, considers the trope of metaphor in his *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, his reason for commending it is that 'none perswadeth more effecteouslye, none sheweth the thyng before our eyes more evidently', and in consequence 'none moveth more mightily the affections' (p. 187). (Skinner is citing Sherry, 1961: 40)

Peacham in his *Garden of Eloquence* goes on to itemise a number of figures with the distinctive property of conveying 'a visible and lively image', while adding in a further reference to the theory of mimesis that 'the Orator imitateth the cunning painter', since his skill in deploying the figures and tropes is such that 'cunning and curious images are made' (p. 187) (Skinner is citing Peacham, 1593: 134,146)

Seeming to summarise the movement which he describe as "from auditors to spectators" as expressed by the rhetoricians of the period, Skinner writes:

A man of good fancy or imagination is accordingly seen as the possessor of two closely connected abilities. He is skilled at conjuring up images or pictures in his mind's eye. But he is also skilled - in consequence of this clarity of mental vision - at communicating these images in correspondingly incisive figures and tropes, and especially in fresh and illuminating similes and metaphors. By his use of similes he prompts his hearers to see that unfamiliar things are similar to things they already know about, thereby enabling them to grasp the unfamiliar with a new sense of understanding and clarity. By his use of metaphors he contrives to suggest, even more daringly, that things unfamiliar are in a certain sense identical with more familiar things, thereby enabling his audience to 'see' even more clearly how to incorporate them into their existing frameworks of belief. (p. 188)

With suitable amendments to accommodate sensitivity about gendered language, I suppose that this might receive wide approval. There are, however, three comments that I would insert here. I refer, first, to the opening phrase "A man of good fancy or imagination". This is the first time that I have noticed this value element, in quite this way. Prior to this, there has been a differentiation between the learned and unlearned - a rather different distinction - a difference possibly turning around a distinction between nature and experience. It seems to me that there is a difference here

between Aristotle and the English Renaissance, a difference which it might not be possible to explain away by claims about prior assumptions of writers and audiences. Perhaps this difference, if indeed recognized, is itself an artefact of political change? For the moment the point is simply registered. My second comment refers to the last phrase of the excerpt: "... to 'see' even more clearly how to incorporate them into their existing frameworks of belief." The view that a belief names something more like a disposition to act in a certain way, or perhaps describes a habit of action, may be grafted easily on to Skinner's description. Since, in this case, Skinner writes of 'frameworks of belief' we might even simply substitute 'habits', or 'customary practice'. This substitution brings us very close to the possibility that we may link metaphor more closely with action than otherwise we might have considered. Third, although it is not entirely clear whether Skinner here speaks for himself or for his subjects, he seems to approve of a strong linking between "conjuring up images or pictures in his mind's eye" and "communicating these images in correspondingly incisive figures and tropes, and especially in fresh and illuminating similes and metaphors". The closeness of connection, for Skinner, is confirmed by his "in consequence of this clarity of mental vision". This is very close to my own view that a full description of adult human seeing will necessitate an account of figurative language.<sup>1</sup>

But metaphors have limits:

The second and contrasting requirement the orator must satisfy is that of knowing how to range freely without getting lost... For this second rule the Roman theorists are again indebted to Aristotle's analysis of the tropes in *The Art of Rhetoric*. As Hobbes's version puts it, 'a metaphor ought not to be so farre fetcht as that the Similitude may not easily appeare'. (p. 190)

As a recommendation when using metaphor in the role of *ornatus* this may be seen as simply good advice. However, Hobbes also proposes further limitations, identifying metaphor in a rather different role:

For though it be lawful to say, for example, in common speech, *the way goeth, or leadeth hither, or thither*; *the proverb says this or that*, whereas ways cannot go, nor proverbs speak; yet in reckoning, and seeking of truth, such speeches are not to be admitted. (Hobbes 1960: 28)

But we cannot be sure of Hobbes. He introduced this section of *Leviathan* with "But this privilege is allayed by another; and that is by the privilege of absurdity; to which no living creature is subject but man only." Absurdity, in the previous paragraph, is one of the terms which Hobbes

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<sup>1</sup> For a view on Locke and the linkage between language and visual perception see Law 1993: 55.

explicitly applies, together with “insignificant” and “nonsense”, to “words whereby we conceive nothing but the sound”. But ‘privilege’? Hobbes does write ironically, and it is possible that he does so here - irony, like metaphor, gives us pause to consider possibilities. It is possible to read this as if it is the case that Hobbes himself recognizes something of a paradox. On the one hand, absurdity is caused, he tells us, “in that they begin not their ratiocination from definitions; that is, from settled significations of their words” from which we may draw the obvious conclusion. And on the other, using metaphor has clear benefits, not fully replaced by ‘words proper’, and are legitimate, provided not used to deceive. Except perhaps to note that the continued explicit presence of such a paradox serves to support the taken-for-granted nature of language, and that to take Hobbes literally as to this “privilege of absurdity” is to suppose that he holds a very high doctrine of the figurative, perhaps we should be content to leave the matter as ambiguous as to this particular point.

Before leaving this and returning to Skinner’s sketch of the rhetoric of the period, we might return to Hobbes’ previous remarks which, for convenience, I repeat:

Of the seven causes of absurdity "The sixth, (is) to the use of metaphors, tropes, and other rhetorical figures, instead of words proper. For though it be lawful to say, for example, in common speech, *the way goeth, or leadeth hither, or thither; the proverb says this or that*, whereas ways cannot go, nor proverbs speak; yet in reckoning, and seeking of truth, such speeches are not to be admitted." (Hobbes 1960: 28)

Hobbes requires his philosophers to act in accordance with the procedures of Geometry. Those who seek truth would be constrained by Hobbes to purge their language of the (lawful) uses of common speech, and he has metaphor, *inter alia*, explicitly in mind. One of the implications, I judge, is that Hobbes thought this possible, albeit, we might concede, with the benefit of due practice. At the least, his injunction requires his readers, when undertaking certain tasks to be alert to their use of metaphor.

Hobbes had prepared the above by describing some aspects of man:

I have said before, in the second chapter, that a man did excel all other animals in this faculty, that when he conceived any thing whatsoever, he was apt to inquire the consequences of it, and what effects he could do with it. (Hobbes 1960: 27)

Risking the charge of eisegesis, I see this description of Hobbes’ own writing as coming very close to linking explicitly the conceptualisation directly to action, rather than to knowledge -

though it is not clear to me that Hobbes sees this as significant. In that second chapter Hobbes had set up an analogy, one that reaches near to the limits that he had himself set, that it be not too 'farre fetcht'. He had first remarked that:

when a thing lies still, unless somewhat else stir it, it will lie still for ever, is a truth that no man doubts of. But that when a thing is in motion, it will eternally be in motion, unless somewhat else stay it, though the reason be the same, namely, that nothing can change itself, is not so easily assented to (p. 9).

Although being a matter which Hobbes understood as "not so easily assented to"<sup>1</sup>, he was happy to use it nonetheless, as the 'known' part of the analogy to describe the natural working of the mind/brain as something which goes on working and, by implication at least, at attending to what effects may be achieved by the words available. Hobbes here first connects the freshly available words with action, rather than, for example, the ontology of the objects named. His view seems to be that the human brain will go on exploring the action possibilities of the new terms, until it is stopped by some other, competing, interest.

Let us return to Skinner's sketch of the rhetoric of the period:

Peacham in the 1593 version of *The Garden of Eloquence* similarly declares that 'eloquence is the light and brightness of wisdom', and that metaphors in particular 'give pleasant light to darke things, thereby removing unprofitable and odious obscuritie'. (p. 195)

Metaphor as the soul of the Enlightenment?

Among the mocking tropes the most effective is said to be *ironia*, which Cicero defines as the form of speech we use 'when the whole drift of your oration shows that you are joking in a solemn way, speaking throughout in a manner contrary to your thoughts'. Quintilian agrees that 'even at its most austere, irony can properly be defined as a kind of joking'. As Quintilian puts it, Cicero's irony consists of 'speaking in derision by saying the opposite of what is to be understood'. (Skinner 1996: 206-7)

In a footnote, alluded to above, Skinner makes a significant point of emphasis in regard to Hobbes's strictures on metaphor, as found in the *Leviathan*:

Note that Hobbes's attack is on the use of metaphors *with the intention to deceive*, not in the use of metaphors *in themselves*, as is frequently but misleadingly claimed....(examples)... For a corrective see Prokhovnik 1991, pp. 110-17. This is clearer from the Latin than the English *Leviathan*. See Hobbes 1668, p. 14, arguing (my italics) that it is 'when words are used

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1 I interrupt Hobbes here simply to draw attention to Newton having published his *Principia* in 1687 whereas the English version of *Leviathan* from which we are here reading Hobbes, was published in 1651. Even if, as is supposed, Newton did much of the work on gravitation during the plague of 1665-6, Hobbes may be taken as evidence that the topic which Newton significantly developed was an issue already in the public domain.

metaphorically, that is in another sense than ordained, and *when as a result of this people are deceived*' that we have an abuse of speech (p. 345, n. 92).

Skinner here draws attention to a view Hobbes expresses in which language is seen as a tool for the construction of community, one which may be put to the most playful uses:

Hobbes is even willing to allow that, as he puts it in discussing the intellectual virtues, 'in profest remissnesse of mind, and familiar company, a man may play with the sounds and aequivocall significations of words; and that many times with encounters of extraordinary Fancy'. Nor should we fear that such ambiguities need act as serious barriers to communication, if only because metaphors are avowedly equivocal and thereby 'profess their inconstancy'. (p. 345)

In that metaphors are indeed "avowedly equivocal" we would not expect Hobbes to speak against metaphor as such. This equivocation (Skinner's term rather than Hobbes'), is probably seen as such from our later perspective. I. A. Richards' early comment that :

The Elizabethans, for example, were far more widely skilled in the use of metaphor - both in utterance and in interpretation - than we are. A fact which made Shakespeare possible.  
(Richards 1936: 94)

should give us pause before characterizing Hobbes' position on metaphor as equivocal. Hobbes' underlying problem is probably better thought of as the relationship of metaphor to the exercise of power.

Hobbes also agrees with Quintillian that the figures and tropes must never be used in putting forward assertions and arguments. Atomising the causes of absurd assertions in chapter v, he lists as the sixth cause 'the use of Metaphors, Tropes and other Rhetorical figures instead of words proper'. This does little harm in ordinary conversation, but 'in reckoning, and seeking of truth, such speeches are not to be admitted' (p. 345).

I have little problem with Skinner's presentation of Hobbes, here - I simply do not have the experience of reading Hobbes in context as does Skinner - but I would have to concede to a Skinner-sceptic that in his glosses upon Hobbes, Skinner does gloss towards a particular interpretation. For example, in the previous extract he, in effect, parenthetically inserts into Hobbes the clause "This does little harm in ordinary conversation". It seems harsh to suggest that even Skinner might be resisting metaphor in so doing. Ever keeping metaphor at the centre, I see Skinner tending to 'patronize' metaphor in an "Earthquake in Middle East, not many dead" mode here. From my point of view, metaphor in conversation is of the essence of human activity (if we are going to permit 'essences'!). Skinner may not be defended by an argument running 'this section is congruent with Hobbes's views of conversation elsewhere'. Elsewhere Hobbes is very

positive about conversation, in play with language, with jokes and riddles in conversation. In his agreement with Quintillian, Hobbes is, in effect, ruling out the device of using rhetoric as a substitute for the demonstrations that better support assertions. Hobbes leaves space for the possibility of pragmatism.

### **Hobbes's Change of Mind**

One of Skinner's theses is that Hobbes changes his mind during his (long) life. One of these changes concerns the use of rhetoric:

Despite these doubts and criticisms, the fact remains that in *Leviathan* Hobbes abandons his earlier insistence that the art of rhetoric must be outlawed from the domain of civil science. (p. 346)

Skinner begins his account with:

To understand why Hobbes reverts to the humanist ideal of a union between *ratio* and *oratio*, we need to begin by noting that *Leviathan* embodies a new and far more pessimistic sense of what the powers of unaided reason can hope to achieve. (p. 347)

In subsequent pages Skinner provides textual evidence from Hobbes's writing showing the earlier position and the gradual steps throughout the change. One of the arguments on this route is presented by Skinner as:

At this juncture he revives a complaint not uncommon among scientific writers of the previous generation to the effect that ordinary people are actually afraid of the sciences. John Dee had lamented in his preface to Billingsley's translation of Euclid that anyone who devotes himself to mathematics is liable to be denounced as a 'coniurer'. Hobbes makes the same complaint, declaring that most people are so far from understanding science 'that they know not what it is', the most obvious instance being the fact that 'Geometry they have thought Conjuring' - an 'Ars Magica', as the Latin *Leviathan* adds. (p. 347)

The difficulties posed by the response of some to the sciences as fear, or as of seeing the sciences as conjuring or magic, is joined by other difficulties. Skinner puts it succinctly:

Hobbes first reminds us of 'the deep meditation which the learning of truth, not onely in the matter of Naturall Justice, but also of all the other Sciences necessarily requireth'. He then adds that it is hardly surprising to find so few people willing or able to undertake this kind of meditation. We can hardly expect it among those 'whom necessity or covetousness keepeth attent on their trades and labour'. Nor can we expect it among those 'whom superfluity or sloth carrieth after their sensuall pleasures'. But the truth is, he adds with evident distaste, that these two sorts of men take up the greatest part of Mankind'. (p. 348)

We need not doubt that that was how Hobbes had come to see the matter. But the glass was probably half-full rather than, as he supposed, more than half-empty. The point has been made at length and strongly that there was, in England especially, just such a group of those who did stand between the twin objects of Hobbes's vehemence.

Steven Shapin has described how the seventeenth century natural philosophers worked within strong 'gentlemanly' codes of conduct, and that England had a distinct advantage over its European neighbours in this respect (sic). Shapin describes his task as:

I set myself the dual task of showing the ineradicable role of what others tell us and of saying how reliance upon testimony achieves invisibility in certain intellectual practices. (Shapin 1994: xxv)

Shapin's subject for detailed attention was Robert Boyle who lived for half a century contemporaneously with Hobbes, albeit some 40 years younger. Shapin's thesis contains the following component:

What we recognize as people-knowledge is a necessary, not a sufficient, condition for the making of thing-knowledge. It follows therefore that what we call 'social knowledge' and 'natural knowledge' are hybrid entities: what we know of comets, icebergs, and neutrinos irreducibly contains what we know of those people who speak for and about those things, just as what we know about the virtues of people is informed by their speech about things that exist in the world. (Shapin 1994: xxvi)

Left like that, Shapin simply describes a circle and articulates no means of entry. To what extent this may be regarded as an important shortcoming may be judged some two pages later as he begins to write of Boyle:

I construe the identity of the "Christian Virtuoso" as a purposeful assemblage of cultural elements warranting truth-telling, and I show how Boyle's acknowledged identity as a Christian gentleman and Christian scholar meant that he was one whose experimental relations might be relied upon with security, who could speak for empirical realities inaccessible to other practitioners, and whose representations might be accepted as corresponding to things themselves. (Shapin 1994: xxviii)

There are two issues raised here that interest me. First, there is something akin to language as a conduit for knowledge, the matter of speaking for empirical realities "inaccessible to other practitioners". Second, that what seems to be important to Shapin is the veridicality of descriptions: "whose representations might be accepted as corresponding to things themselves." Seen from my perspective, Shapin seems to be concealing something here. Much of what Boyle reported, and it is the reports that Shapin is concerned with, describes what Boyle did. They are



concerned with his actions. Boyle tells a story about matters which, to some extent, are indeed of realities “inaccessible to other practitioners” in that he constructed, or had constructed, pumps and other devices. His reports may be relied upon, and form, so to speak, a kind of database from which further descriptions may be made. Boyle began the process, let us call it theorizing, which drew upon the database and also upon an unproblematized language coupled with previous experience. For Shapin’s general case to hold, the ‘others’ are others with a good deal of experience in common to draw upon. The metaphors and models used by the narrator are never so ‘farre-fetcht’. This limitation is addressed in his epilogue in which he begins a comparison between the seventeenth century and the present. He sets up a number of analogies, the London ‘season’, and court, with the international conference, noting some similarities, for example of frequency of meeting and “looking each other in the eye”. He says that they not only know each other in this way, but that they “know each other’s people” in “ways comparable to the culture manipulated by traditional gentlemen, where patterns of institutional training and theoretical or practical affiliation do the work done for gentlemen by family and kin.” (p. 415) Whatever else Shapin is describing here, he is also describing the circumstances in which metaphor is likely (a) to be most effective and (b) least likely to be noticed.

A recent ethnographer of physics, John Law, writes:

One possibility is this: it is to say that in the last instance there really *is* something special and privileged about personal contact. It’s to say that at the end of the day the heterogeneous networks of the social are, as it were, cemented together by virtue of face-to-face contact between individuals. This, I guess, is what Erving Goffman assumes. And Anthony Giddens builds it, in an entirely different manner, into his analysis of ontological security. (Law 1994: 182)

This passage is dense with metaphor, among the candidates are: ‘personal contact’, ‘heterogeneous networks’, ‘cemented’, ‘in the last instance’ and ‘face-to-face contact’. Here metaphors are deployed at that very point between writer and reader where the writer has come to the end, or very nearly so, of explanation, or even of description. We are at the potential growth-point of his science and he lards his account with metaphor, but does not include metaphor as one of his hypotheses. Hypotheses which include “the way in which materials -

somatic, textual, technical and architectural - are told and performed", "ordering the expressions 'given off', the slips of the tongue", "the strain towards backstage and front", "between dualism of mind and body". He concludes the paragraph:

So I'm suggesting that it is this, this process of ruthless testing, that gives the body, and the interactions that take place face-to-face, their particular moral significance in enterprise.

(Law 1994: 182)

Law reaches further:

I'm not certain about the role of face-to-face interaction, and the proper character of agency in the case of administration. But for vision the body is the vehicle of grace. So the issue is - how is bodily grace and charisma transmitted? Does it depend on face-to-face interaction? Or can it flow down the channels of communication? I don't know the answers to any of these questions, though it does seem likely that television, and possibly recorded music, may create, shape, and transmit grace.... (Law 1994: 183)

I wish to make no judgement about the hypotheses which Law lists here, other than to say that he seems not to be being either reflexive, or symmetrical in his treatments in respect of his own and others' work. Is it appropriate for Law to employ metaphor in his own work, but not to regard the metaphors of his subjects as of interest? Resistance (to metaphor) rules?

Skinner now turns to that aspect of Hobbes' *Leviathan* which first attracted my attention:

The other aspect of *elocutio* invariably treated at length by the rhetoricians was *ornatus*, the addition of 'ornament' or 'adornment' to our utterances in the form of figures and tropes. This brings us to the most important change of perspective in Hobbes' later writings on civil science. It is a change, moreover, that arguably stands in need of special emphasis, if only because Hobbes has recently been criticised by a surprising number of commentators for allegedly combining a theoretical hostility in *Leviathan* to the use of figures and tropes with an extensive use of exactly these resources of *ornatus* throughout his text. This is held to give rise to 'a noteworthy disparity' <sup>1</sup>, and even to 'obvious contradiction' <sup>2</sup> between his literary theory and his own practice. Hobbes is said to violate his own rules <sup>3</sup> to such an extent - to such a glaring extent that we are left confronting a paradox: 'despite his vociferous polemics against metaphors', Hobbes 'is probably the most metaphorical of political philosophers'. <sup>4</sup> (p. 363)

I quote this passage in full (though not including all of Skinner's references) for two reasons. First because, in an earlier writing, I offered this 'paradox' as a part of my reasons for an interest in metaphor,<sup>5</sup> and second because this apparent paradox was one of my motivating curiosities in

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1 May 1959: 4

2 Kahn 1985: 157

3 Kahn 1985: 157

4 Whelan 1981: 71

5 (Lambourn, 1997)

beginning this study. If Hobbes apparently behaved in a way which seemed to me to require some explanation when making one of the earliest attempts at social theory, was there not something of interest to be explored? (*Pace Lear*, I say it was my curiosity which drove me.)

Skinner begins his response:

As so often, however, the confusion seems to lie with Hobbes' critics rather than with Hobbes.  
(p. 363)

I narrowly avoid being one of Skinner's targets here, but Skinner might have been a little more transparent here and warned us or, perhaps better, advertised to his readers, that what was to follow was the nub of one of his contributions to the writing of history. In certain respects this is the point at which the use of figurative language in the writing of history, and also in the attempts to write social theory, meet.

Skinner continues:

What these unwisely condescending accusations overlook is the extent to which Hobbes changed his mind about his literary principles as well as his practice between the severely scientific prose of *The Elements* and the highly 'ornamental' style of *Leviathan*. What these critics consequently fail to register is the degree to which Hobbes' use of *ornatus* in *Leviathan* mirrors a new-found willingness to endorse a humanist understanding of the proper relationship between reason and eloquence. (p. 363)

This redescription doesn't quite cover the 'accusations' to which Skinner has earlier referred, insofar as the 'accusation' may also be raised internally within *Leviathan*. I concede that Skinner has put forward a defence by drawing attention to Hobbes' own qualification, 'when words are used metaphorically, that is in another sense than ordained, and *when as a result of this people are deceived*'. That this was relegated to a footnote (p. 345, n. 92), I take to be a sign that Skinner is himself not quite convinced that this is a sufficient defence. One may offer an hypothesis as to why Skinner finds himself in this position (if indeed he does): this would be that he has not problematized the divisions of rhetoric which he has been using, *ratio*, *oratio* and *ornatus*. Can *ornatus* simply be ornament? Should we not rather treat it as a term which has served particular uses in its reified status, but is not a helpful term when considering the status of figurative language, as distinct from its normal home in rhetoric? This is a question which, for the time being, at least, I do not wish to pursue. But the question about the possible internal inconsistency of *Leviathan* in relation to the use of metaphor is a minor point in relation to the main issue. The

main issue here remains the place of figurative language in social theory or, in one of Hobbes' terms, 'civill science'. For my purposes, the question must be posed more widely; that we consider the issue of the use of metaphor (etc.) in any writing, or indeed conversation, though I assume that these contexts must be differentiated. With these wider contexts in mind, we may follow Skinner's defence of Hobbes further:

The capacity to make effective use of *ornatus* is treated by Hobbes at all times as the distinctive product of a powerful imagination or fancy. (p. 363)

So we do follow Hobbes and Skinner towards these wider contexts. Skinner continues:

He first makes the point when discussing different types of wit in *The Elements*, arguing that it is due to 'excellence of FANCY' that some people are able to discover 'grateful Similes, Metaphors and other Tropes'. (p. 363)

To which I think I can almost hear Donald Davidson muttering something about explaining why opium makes you sleepy by talking about its dormitive power. No, that is probably a little too dogmatic, but it does suggest the possibility that it is the skill in languaging which provides the 'fancy', and that 'fancy' is again a term which has served well in its reified form. In the strong form of my thesis, Hobbes (and Skinner) do not recognise the figurative quality of 'fancy'. But for the time being we should remain with Skinner and his account of Hobbes' theory of imagination.

### **Hobbes' theory of imagination** (taken from Skinner)

I draw from Skinner a description of Hobbes' theory of imagination first as found in *The Elements*, and then in *Leviathan*, together with some hints at some possible reasons for his changes of view.

Skinner writes:

According to *The Elements*, a powerful fancy can therefore be defined as a reflection of two conjoined qualities. One is a 'quick Rangeing of minde'. which Hobbes compares in chapter 4 with the purposeful raging of spaniels in quest of a scent. The other is a 'curiosity of Comparing' the various images that swarm into the mind as it ranges over the images contained within it. The characteristic outcome of encouraging the mind to roam in this systematic manner is the discovery of 'unexpected similitudes in things', while the characteristic expression of these novel and surprising connections takes the form of 'Similes, Metaphors and other Tropes'. (p. 364)

Skinner describes how Hobbes goes on to mark a sharp contrast between fancy and the faculty that enables us to acquire genuine knowledge. Whereas Hobbes regards the finding of unexpected similitudes as potentially enabling manipulation and deception, the faculty which leads to genuine knowledge stands at the opposite pole from fancy, since it discerns "suddainely

dissimilitude in things that otherwise appear the same". This is normally named as judgment. Skinner comments, "There is no place in *The Elements* for the possibility that the fancy might be capable of co-operating with judgment in the production of knowledge and hence the construction of a genuine science." (p. 365)

Skinner then contrasts these passages from *The Elements* with the review and conclusion of *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes wants to oppose the view he had previously put forward.

Skinner puts it:

Some people believe, (Hobbes) observes, that there is not only a 'contrariety of some of the Naturall Faculties of the Mind', but that this gives us grounds for doubting whether 'any one man should be sufficiently disposed to all sorts of Civill duty' (p. 438). The alleged contrariety on which he particularly focuses is between 'Celerity of Fancy' on the one hand and 'Severity of Judgment' on the other. (p. 365)

In brief, and Skinner describes the argument as tentative and hard to follow, Hobbes concludes that a poet must take care to speak only from his own experience, ensuring that 'his coulour and shaddow' are taken 'out of his owne store'. (p. 369) Skinner points out a difference in the Latin *Leviathan* where Hobbes observes that 'it is not usual' for pure flights of fancy to be praised in the absence of judgment. (p. 370-1) Skinner comments that:

It follows that, when we speak of a man as having an excellent fancy, we are not merely describing his talent for discovering similitudes; we are also praising his capacity for observing 'Discretion of times, places and persons' and for committing himself to 'an often application of his thoughts to their End; that is to say, to some use to be made of them'. (p. 371)

In this one sentence Skinner has combined imagination, its social context, and the relation to use when referring to Hobbes' final statement on tropes. We should keep in mind that the author of a metaphor, by the act of using it, typically extends the use of a word to cover a new situation and in so doing, ceases to think of it as metaphor and instead tends to present the discovery or hypothesis as an established, literal term. This bears linking with the notion of a symbiotic relation of metaphor with pragmatism, and with the close connection between fresh terms and action as evidenced here in Hobbes. We may allow Skinner the final word on his hero.

With these changing views about the imagination, Hobbes contributed at different stages of his intellectual career to two contrasting strands of thought about fancy and judgment in later seventeenth-century England (p. 374).

Locke is conspicuous by his absence in these pages, partly because I have found no equivalent writer for Locke as Skinner has been for Hobbes, in part also for reasons of space. I will conclude this section with a comment from Berlin who, while commenting on the adventurousness of Vico's claim that our predecessors' knowledge of the world, through metaphor as "superior, perhaps, in sheer power and spontaneous vitality to, its more civilised successors" (p. 127), goes on to remind his readers of the growing institutional influences at work:

The seventeenth century is a time in which the very use of metaphor was widely suspect, especially in the centres of progressive thought, in France, in England, in Holland, inasmuch as this kind of luxuriant imagery was associated with a pre-scientific or anti-scientific frame of mind. Metaphor, we are informed by an eminent authority, was connected with 'the false world of ancient superstition, dreams, myths, terrors with which the lurid, barbarous imaginations peopled the world, causing error and irrationalism and persecution'. Thomas Sprat, one of the founders of the Royal Society, declared that 'specious Tropes and Figures' should be banished 'out of all *civill Societies* as a thing fatal to Peace and good Manners'; the Royal Society should avoid 'mists and uncertainties', and return to 'a close, naked, natural way of speaking... bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness, as they can'. (Berlin 2000: 127) <sup>1</sup>

Warned by my mis-taking of Hobbes, somewhat summarily corrected by Skinner, I should be more circumspect in commenting upon Sprat's remarks. Perhaps it is most prudent to see them as possibly commenting upon social consequences of specious tropes and figures. We might further remark that Sprat seems either not to notice, or perhaps to regard as non-specious, his own metaphor of naked in respect of a style of speaking. Either way, it seems that the recommendation, coming from that source, does constitute a resistance to metaphor emanating from a new, and influential, institution.

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1 The quotation is from *The History of the Royal Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (Sprat 1667: 111-3)

## Chapter 3

### In Relation to Vico

*Our world is a projected world, shot through with characters lent to it from our own life. "We receive but what we give." The processes of metaphor in language, the exchanges between the meanings of words which we study in explicit verbal metaphors, are super-imposed upon a perceived world which is itself a product of earlier or unwitting metaphor, and we shall not deal with them justly if we forget that this is so.*

Richards, I. A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* p. 108

#### The priority of metaphor

I turn now to Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), and in particular to part of the third edition of his *Nuova Scienza*. (Vico 1968)<sup>1</sup>. Vico was almost unknown outside his own country until the nineteenth century. Berlin, who together with Hayden White is one of the two main champions of Vico in English in the second half of the twentieth century, describes him as never having been accepted as part of the philosophical canon (Berlin 2000: 53).<sup>2</sup>

Vico used metaphor as a tool within philology to produce a theory of 'poetic logic' (§400ff). This included the notion that names were given to features of the natural world that were already well known, drawing for example upon the body - rivers and bottles were given 'mouths' etc.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Section nos., marked '\$', are as given in (Vico 1968).

2 Ignatieff comments of Berlin that: "Thinking, for him, was always a dialogue either with a friend or with a book. A blank sheet of paper aroused dread; a page of Vico stimulated spark after spark of reflection. (Ignatieff 1998: 244). I cite this remark, partly for the linkage between thinking and dialogue, and partly for the effect of reading Vico and the variety of 'sparks' that result. Whilst denying any other claim to a comparison with Berlin, I do seek a reader's indulgence if this present chapter is thought to be overly discursive.

3 It is noteworthy that in all languages the greater part of expressions concerning inanimate things are created by metaphors from the human body and its parts and from the human senses and passions. For example, 'head' for summit or beginning; '(in the) face (of)' and '(at the) back (of)' for in front and behind; 'mouth' for every (sort of) hole; 'lip' for the rim of a vase or anything (similar); the 'teeth' of a plough, rake, saw or comb; a 'tongue' of sea; the 'gorges' and 'throats' of rivers and

Whence we derive the following (principle of) criticism for the times in which the metaphors were born in the (various) languages: that all metaphors which, by means of likenesses taken from bodies, come to signify the labours of abstract minds, must belong to times in which philosophies had begun to become more refined. This is shown by the following: that in all languages the words necessary to cultivated arts and recondite sciences have rural origins. (§404)

Vico's view led him to reverse the standard relationship of the poetic to the literal. Here, he begins by noting the reducibility of the tropes to four<sup>1</sup>:

From all this it follows that all the tropes (and they are all reducible to the four types above discussed) which have hitherto been considered ingenious inventions of writers, were necessary modes of expression of all the first poetic nations, and had originally their full native propriety. But these expressions of the first nations later became figurative when, with the further development of the human mind, words were invented which signified abstract forms or genera comprising their species or relating parts with their wholes. And here begins the overthrow of two common errors of the grammarians: that prose speech is proper speech, and poetic speech improper; and that prose speech came first and afterward speech in verse. (§409.)

Vico's theory links the actions of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Metaphor identifies a new domain of human experience making it possible for metonymy to identify its parts, synecdoche to elaborate the relations between the attributes of parts to the whole, and irony to inspect the earlier practices for their adequacy, by a test of opposition. When irony is correctly detected the new object may be regarded as appropriately established in the consciousness of the person or group.

If wanting to trace influences in the history of how metaphor has been viewed, appropriating Vico for one's purposes presents a number of problems. The last version of the *New Science*, published in the year of Vico's death, might easily be presumed to have influenced writers from that time. It seems that such an assumption would be mistaken, and that for many purposes Vico's wider influence may be better thought of as beginning in the nineteenth century. When White writes that Vico "anticipated the social theories of thinkers as diverse as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Freud, and Levi-Strauss" (White 1985: 197) he does so, clear that 'to

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mountains; a 'neck' of land; the (two) 'arms' of a river; a 'hand(ful)' for a small number; 'flanks' and 'sides' for edges; 'heart' for the centre (which the Latins called umbilicus); 'foot' for (the end of) a country and the ends of things in general; 'sole' (also) for the base ( of a ploughshare or shoe); the 'flesh' of fruit; a 'vein' of water, stone or mineral; the 'blood' of the vine, for wine; the 'bowels' of the earth. (Similarly) the sky and the sea 'smile', the wind 'whistles', the waves 'murmur', and objects 'groan' under a heavy weight. (§405)

1 This reduction in the number of tropes was not original to Vico. It was part of a general movement. In England, Omar Talon had published such in 1631. (Talon, 1631)



anticipate' is not 'to imply a relation of influence', the latter being a matter he expects to be debated for some time to come.<sup>1</sup>

Picking Vico to play in my team is unavoidable. That much of what he wrote, was at best fanciful, may be disregarded as an argument for passing him by. His achievements included, in some respects, the moral one of courage. He acted (wrote) with an enviable ability to see (imagine?) what might lie behind many contemporary assumptions. Berlin sketches some of this:

Descartes and his disciples dominated thought in Vico's youth, and Descartes had made it plain that true knowledge rests on clear and irrefutable axioms and the application of rules whereby conclusions may be rigorously drawn from such premises, so that a system can be constructed that is logically guaranteed in all its parts. (Berlin 2000: 55)

This drive towards redescribing knowledge so that only the de-historicized, generalizations were acceptable, was not one which could easily be accepted by someone whose upbringing and interests were in jurisprudence and its history. Berlin continues:

(Vico) raised the banner of revolt: he conceded that all that Descartes had said about mathematics was true, demonstrable, wholly clear and irrefutable; but this was so because mathematics conveyed no information about the world. Mathematics was a system created by the human mind, like a game whose moves are invented arbitrarily, so that they are wholly intelligible because they have been constructed for this very purpose. Mathematics was a human construction: it was not a transcript of reality. (Berlin 2000: 56-7)<sup>2</sup>

## Irony and the development of language.

Berlin's interests do not include those of tropological structures, and it is to Hayden White that I return for what is probably the best, brief, description of Vico's contribution available for my purposes. He writes of the third edition of *New Science*:

Vico argues that all figures of speech may be reduced to four modes or tropes: metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony (§§ 404-9). This contention follows Aristotle but with this

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- 1 In view of the use which Rorty will later make of literature, it might be worth mentioning in passing that Vico was an important source of ideas for James Joyce who in a letter wrote: "I would not pay overmuch attention to these theories (of Vico) beyond using them for all they are worth, but they have gradually forced themselves on me through circumstances of my own life". (Gilbert, 1966: 270)
  - 2 I should perhaps acknowledge here, as intimated in my introduction, an aspect of my own experience. It is that I was taught chemistry at secondary school as if it were a branch of history, with the class unable to proceed further until it had solved each significant problem as it arose. I still remember my frustration at having spent several double periods before succeeding in 'inventing' the concept of valency. The only tools available, intellectual and physical, were those to which we had previously been introduced, plus 'conversation'.

An exploration of the consequences of replacing Descartes' "I think" with "I do" within an analytic paradigm, an exploration paralleling Vico's distinction in *verum ipsum factum*, but not so acknowledged, was carried out in the Gifford Lectures of 1954 by John Macmurray. (Macmurray, 1957; Macmurray, 1961)

difference: Vico restricts the meaning of the mental operations indicated by each trope. Moreover, he makes of metaphor a kind of primal (generic) trope, so that synecdoche and metonymy are viewed as specific refinements of it, and irony is seen as its opposite. Thus, whereas metaphor constitutes the basis of every fable (or myth), the escape from metaphorical language and the transition into the use of a consciously figurative language (and thus into literal and denotative, or prose, discourse) are made possible by the emergence of an ironic sensibility. It is thus that the dialectic of figurative (tropological) speech itself becomes conceivable as the model by which the evolution of man from bestiality to humanity can be explained. Or to put it another way, the theory of metaphorical transformation serves as the model for a theory of the auto transformation of human consciousness in history. How Vico developed such a view can be shown only after we have considered his theory of tropes. (White 1985: 204-5)

It is of interest that Vico's arguments about the reduction of the tropes to four are arguments based upon their use; this is not to suggest that we should understand Vico as pragmatist *avant la lettre*. Rather, it is because he is able, with metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, to give an account of the development of Man from the 'beasts' by dint of these four alone<sup>1</sup>.

## Scienza Nuova

Irony certainly could not have begun until the period of reflection, because it is fashioned of falsehood by dint of a reflection which wears the mask of truth. (Vico 1968: §408.

The role, for Vico, of the 'ironic sensibility' is significant to my view of metaphor. I am not concerned whether or not Vico is historically 'right' about the need for a prior ironic sensibility before a 'literal' language can develop out of a figurative one.<sup>2</sup> By giving his account of the relationship of the tropes through the medium of an 'historical' narrative, Vico creates a new myth. His writing has what Carl Rogers might have described as 'congruence'. Vico is true to his view of tropes, as Nietzsche will later be to his view of metaphor.

It occurs to me, at this point, that the proliferation of 'sparks' with which Berlin, and others, have responded to Vico, may have its root within this congruence in Vico's writing. I have not found this suggestion either in Berlin, or in Hayden White, but it could just be the case that they overlooked one feature of Vico. This might be described as Vico discovering that his 'mythic' approach had the same 'spark' -inducing effect on him (Vico) - though it would not be part of my

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1 Kenneth Burke adopts this arrangement, without an acknowledgement to Vico, but with a telling image of his own, in the appendix to *The Grammar of Rhetoric*: "... the four tropes shade into one another. Give a man but one of them, tell him to exploit its possibilities, and if he is thorough in doing so, he will come upon the other three." (Burke, 1969: 503) There is a further similarity between Burke and Vico here, in that Vico supposed that societies developed by moving from one dominant trope to another.

2 Other descriptions have been put forward as, for example, Nietzsche's suggestion of forgetting. See below, page 66ff.

suggestion that he became entirely aware of this. As circumstantial evidence, one might point to the breadth of subjects upon which he wrote and upon his willingness to provide several major revisions of *Scienza Nuova*. That does leave us with the problem of why, if this form of writing was so powerful for him, and in the 19th and 20th centuries for new generations of writers, it did not immediately attract disciples, users, among his contemporaries, and this provokes questions of how things might have been otherwise.

We should now return to the relation of irony to the other major tropes and 'ordinary language', described in terms of Vico's myth, without having in any important sense left it. It seems that we might say of Vico's view that ordinary 'literal' language is conditional upon the ironic standpoint. In turn, borrowing the idiom of forgetting from Nietzsche, we might say that not only has there been a forgetting that metaphor was metaphor, but that there has been a parallel forgetting that ordinary language is under licence from irony.<sup>1</sup> Vico, having enunciated the relationship, may be considered to have been aware of this aspect of the set of tools which he now had available for examining whatever parts of his culture might take his interest: and Vico's rule of looking first at the earliest possible emergence of whatever it was that interested him, was congruent with his perception of the role of irony which allowed the metaphorical to grow / decline / develop into concepts.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Cooper mentions Vico on three occasions only, and is dismissive of his arguments. He does not consider the possibility that Vico's 'ironic standpoint' might be taken as an alternative to Nietzsche's 'forgetting', with which 'forgetting' Cooper is not impressed. He describes Nietzsche's story as "not coherent" on the grounds that "People can only forget that a use was metaphorical if at some time they had been aware that it was this. But they could only have had this awareness if they were able to distinguish metaphorical from literal use. To suppose that they had this ability, however, destroys the whole thrust of Nietzsche's argument." (Cooper, 1986: 262) Cooper's dismissal of Nietzsche does not, I think, take down with it my notion of the forgetting of the licence of irony. Perhaps more significantly, Cooper seems not to read Vico as reasserting myth, he rather takes Vico to be 'literally' wrong about early man and, not understanding Vico on myth, applies inappropriate criteria, as he also does to Nietzsche's 'forgetting'.
  - 2 Berlin is aware of the effect that Vico has upon him, and makes suggestions as to why Vico comes into, and then goes out of, fashion as a writer. He begins by suggesting that "The principal reason for this destiny is probably the obscurity and chaotic nature of his writing. His thought is a tangled forest of seminal ideas, recondite allusions and quotations, sudden excursions and divagations - rich, strange, confused, arresting, immensely suggestive, but unreadable. Too many novel ideas are jostling to find expression at the same time; he is trying to say too much about too much; the ideas conflict and obscure each other, and although this communicates a kind of turbulent vitality to all that he writes, it does not make for lucidity or elegance. The reader tends to be buffeted, bewildered and exhausted; no idea is properly presented or developed or organized into a coherent structure. It is a very punishing style. As Bizet said of Berlioz, he had genius without any talent. Yet much of what he has to say is of cardinal importance - original and convincing." (Berlin, 2000: 54) From my perspective, Berlin is over-hasty with his pejorative description of Vico's writing - we might say that Vico allows, to advert to McLuhan's phrase, the medium to be at least part of the message. To suggest that Vico could have organized his ideas "into a coherent structure" is to set up a tension with the contingent historical

Lee Capel, translating and introducing Kierkegaard's thesis *On the Concept of Irony with Constant Reference to Socrates* offers what I take to be a summary of it:

The ironic figure of speech cancels itself, however, for the speaker presupposes that his listener understands him, and hence through the negation of the immediate expression *the essence remains identical with the phenomenon*. Ironic communication is deliberately contingent, therefore, and the incommensurability posited in its structure enables the speaker to detach himself from the linguistic expression and distance himself from the listener. In this way he is said to emancipate himself in the interest of negative freedom, a subjectivity coupled with isolation. Communication has now become precarious, indirect, at once exclusive and selective, for the ironist does wish to be universally understood. Accordingly, if the basic communication situation has five components: a speaker, a medium, an expression, a context, and a respondent, still, the *what* of ironic discourse remains a nothingness. For this to be present, as possibility, we require a further condition, viz., the Platonic assumption that every man has the truth in himself. For such a possibility to become actual, however, we require yet a final condition, viz., the operation of a Socratic agency, the maieutic artist, whereby the listener is activated to make the same movement of reflection, whereby he ventures to engage his own subjectivity. The *what* may not be asserted from without but only enacted from within, for with finite man the word must come after the deed and that is its truth. Here it may be seen that the art of indirect discourse, as conceived by Kierkegaard, aspires to nothing so much as to create something out of nothing. To comprehend this much of the ideal significance of irony is to grasp its meaning as *contradiction* (ambiguity), its structure as *dialectical*, its medium the *language of reflection*, its style *antithetical*, and its aim *self-discovery*. (Capel 1966: 32)

The young Kierkegaard was significantly under the influence of Hegel, and although he might have known Vico's work, this seems not fully to have emerged in his thinking, in spite of the amount of work which both expect irony to achieve. The summary above will bear comparison with a constructivist approach.

White describes the role of irony in Vico:

Thus the trope of irony, in which falsehood is presented as the truth, constitutes the limit of figurative characterizations of reality; for an ironic utterance is not merely a statement about reality, as metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche are, but presupposes at least a tacit awareness of the disparity between the statement and the reality it is supposed to represent. Ironic speech implicitly invokes the distinction between truthful and false speaking and thus points to the distinction between literal and figurative representation, thereby constituting the basis of all those sciences which, through use of stipulated meanings, consciously seek not only to make true statements about the world but also to expose the error or inadequacy of any given figurative characterization of it. (White 1985: 208) <sup>1</sup>

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development that Vico wishes to describe.

- 1 The point may be gathered in a sharpened form from a remark attributed to Thomas Mann: "the intellectual human being must choose between irony and radicalism. A third choice is not possible." (Cited by Enright (1986)). Mann is generous here, as it appears to me, in that this remark applies properly only to those who have not rendered problematic the ordinary view of language.

From the point of view of holding metaphor at the centre, irony serves to protect that ontology of language which sees language as an object in the world rather than as the abstract noun which is used to obviate the necessity of constant circumlocution to human abilities with noises and scratches. We could approach this issue by asking questions such as: Would we have a use for the word 'irony' if we denied the 'existence' of language?<sup>1</sup> We shall see later that Rorty's proposal of the figure of the 'liberal ironist' has the effect of offering a compromise by focusing on an intermediate notion of multiplicity of vocabularies and their contingency.

Hayden White introduces Vico's originality:

It is to this work (New Science) that scholars refer when they speak of Vico's achievement and the ways in which he anticipated the social theories of thinkers as diverse as Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Freud, and Lévi-Strauss. In his own time, his originality consisted primarily in his insistence, against both the Cartesians and some of the *jus naturalists*, on the necessity of a different conceptual apparatus for the analysis of social and cultural phenomena from that which might legitimately be used to analyze the processes and structures of physical nature. The formula in which this insight was expressed asserted the "convertibility" of the "true" and the "fabricated," or the principle of *verum ipsum factum*.

This principle asserts that men can know only that which they themselves have made or are in principle capable of making. As an enabling postulate, it provides the means, for distinguishing between the heuristic potentiality of the sciences of physical nature on the one side and the projected sciences of human nature, of culture, and of society on the other. (White 1985:197-8)

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Of this principle, *verum ipsum factum*, Berlin writes:

This was Vico's great move. He reached it in about 1720, when he was overwhelmed by the fascinating vista of rewriting the history of mankind in terms of the acts of men, based on insight into their monuments, the frozen relics of such acts; relying not on the writing of historians, which may indeed be adequate or mendacious, but on what men have made in order to communicate with others, men or gods: artefacts, words, works of art, social institutions, which

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- 1 Owen Barfield has argued along similar lines to Vico's view of the precedence of metaphor, by arguing for the thesis, which he attributes to Herbert Spencer and Max Müller, that primitive man saw things much as we do, that is, he named the objects about him, applied these names for physical things figuratively to describe his inner life, then fell into myth by mistakenly taking his own metaphors literally. Against this, Barfield suggests that what we know of the origins of language gives us little reason to suppose that language was ever pre-metaphorical. (Barfield, 1965: 116-22)
  - 2 Rorty has only one explicit reference to Vico in such of his writing that has appeared in book form. This is in his essay, *Texts and Lumps*, in which he draws a comparison between a continuum of statements on a distinction roughly corresponding to 'meaning' and 'nature', or between 'things made' and 'things found' - he allows for 'borderline' examples. His Level 2 statements are, for 'Texts': "What the author would, under ideal conditions, reply to questions about his inscription which are phrased in terms which he can understand right off the bat." His statement for Level 2 "Lumps": "The real essence of the lump which lurks behind its appearances - how God or Nature would describe the lump." He comments: "I would claim that the fact that Level 2 makes sense for text but not for lumps is the kernel of truth in Vico's insight that the human realm is genuinely knowable while the realm of nature is not." (Rorty, 1991: 87)

can be understood by other men because they are men, and because those communications are addressed by men to men. (Berlin 2000: 59-60)

Berlin has little explicit critical interest in the tropes. Seen from within my view, Vico's principle leads him to consider men's actions and the monuments of those actions or events. The monuments may be various. My view of metaphor as arising out of an action or event may, with some justification, be described as "frozen relic", in that it marks an event in a temporary state, a word or phrase. Metaphor may be extended here into poem, play, novel, or myth. In a more extended treatise we might wish to include other forms of art.<sup>1</sup>

Alastair MacIntyre is one of the contemporary writers who has explicitly cited Vico as one of his 'precursors' - to use Bloom's term:

Vico reminds us of what the Enlightenment had forgotten, that rational inquiry, whether about morality or about anything else, continues the work of, and remains rooted in, prerational myth and metaphor. Such inquiry does not begin from Cartesian first principles, but from some contingent historical starting point, some occasion that astonishes sufficiently to raise questions, to elicit rival answers and, hence, to lead on to contending argument. (MacIntyre 1994: 147)

MacIntyre also resists the notion of universal truths:

For it was Vico who first stressed the importance of the undeniable fact, which it is becoming tedious to reiterate, that the subject matters of moral philosophy at least - the evaluative and normative concepts, maxims, arguments and judgments about which the moral philosopher enquires - are nowhere to be found except as embodied in the historical lives of particular social groups and so possessing the distinctive characteristics of historical existence: both identity and change through time, expression in institutionalized practice as well as in discourse, interaction and interrelationship with a variety of forms of activity. Morality which is no particular society's morality is to be found nowhere. (also cited by Mali (p. 268)) (MacIntyre 1985: 265-6)

My link to MacIntyre rests largely on my view that metaphor should be understood as arising out of an event or action, that is, my attempt to see metaphor as a word, a phrase, a sentence which is produced in consequence of an event or action. The scene is almost immediately set for a narrative feeding on the metaphor. MacIntyre uses narrative as one of his main tools in his explications in *After Virtue*. Metaphor which has linked the actors in ways in which Ted Cohen would recognize, is poised for passing to peers; prosaically as narrative or reportage, more poetically developed in the retelling as myth. This prepares the ground to add Bakhtin in due

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1 This matter is especially topical, as I write this on the first Holocaust Memorial Day (January 27, 2001).

course (see p. 98ff).

White expresses one of Vico's original views as:

Vico utilized the fourfold distinction among the tropes as a basis for differentiating the stages of consciousness through which mankind has passed from primitivism to civilization. Instead of seeing an *opposition* between poetic (mythic) consciousness and prosaic (scientific) consciousness, therefore, Vico saw a *continuity*. (White 1973: 32 n.13)

Metaphor might well be seen as a method of reaching across boundaries other than those between individuals, perhaps also between cultures. Since a successful metaphor requires at least some overlap of associated commonplaces, perhaps we should expect inter-cultural metaphor to be based upon the natural, perhaps even of the 'body'. There is, however, the difficulty that even our perceptions of the body are culturally plural.

Vico, whatever else he was, was not a monist... He became a dualist: this indeed, was his cardinal move. He did not draw a line at the point at which Descartes drew it - between mind and matter, or between *a priori* knowledge of the real world and *a posteriori* perception of the world of the senses, with its unreliable secondary qualities. Vico drew such a line, but he drew it elsewhere: between activity and passivity, between, on the one hand, *mens* in human affairs, incarnated in human beings, guided, indeed determined, by God and Providence, but themselves created agents, who have constructed the civil or political-historical world; and, on the other, *mens* in nature, which God, whose instrument it is, can understand, but which men, who have not made it, is opaque and inscrutable. (Berlin 2000: 145)

What engages Vico's thought is ancient Rome, and after Rome, Greece - the classical hunting-ground of the theorists of natural law - and he draws a moral that is precisely opposite to that of the natural lawyers: that man's nature is to be conceived in social terms, not individual; those of movement and change, not fixity and rest; to be sought in history not in timeless metaphysics. ... To say that historical knowledge differs from scientific is one thing; but Vico's thesis that historical knowledge is better founded than scientific is quite another and much bolder. (Berlin 2000: 148-9)

Writing about an accepted truth that man is 'of a piece with nature': there is a human nature 'as invariant ... as Newton's universe',<sup>1</sup> Berlin writes:

This position, perhaps the deepest single assumption of Western thought, was attacked by two of the fathers of modern historicism, Vico and Herder. We all know that these thinkers denied the possibility of establishing the final truth in all the provinces of human thought by the application of the laws of the natural sciences. Both Vico and Herder are sometimes described as relativists. In this connection one thing ought to be made clear. There are at least two types of relativism, that of judgements of fact, and that of judgements of values. The first, in its strongest form, denies the very possibility of objective knowledge of facts, since all belief is conditioned by the place in the social system, and therefore by the interests, conscious or not, of the theorist, or of the group or class to which he belongs. The weaker version (for example

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1 An example in the literature of anthropology may be found for example in Clifford Geertz *Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, 1973: 34).

that of Karl Mannheim) exempts the natural sciences from this predicament, or identifies a privileged group (in Mannheim's view the intelligentsia) as being, somewhat mysteriously, free from these distorting factors.

Whether the first, or stronger, version is ultimately self-refuting (as I am inclined to believe) is a philosophical crux that cannot be discussed here. It is, however, only the second type of relativism, that of values or entire outlooks, that is in question here. No one, so far as I know, has ascribed relativism regarding factual knowledge to Vico or Herder. (Berlin 1990: 74ff)

I cite this, and the following excerpt, at length in the expectation that I shall have cause to refer to it again when, later, discussing Rorty's proposals as to human solidarity in his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*.

Vico never tells us what he means by what he calls 'entering into' or 'descending to' the minds of primitive men, but from his practice in the *Scienza nuova* it is plain that it is imaginative insight that he demands, a gift which he calls *fantasia*.<sup>1</sup> Later German writers spoke of *verstehen* - to understand - as opposed to *wissen*, the kind of knowledge we have in the natural sciences, where 'entering' is not in question, since one cannot enter into the hopes and fears of bees and beavers. Vico's *fantasia* is indispensable to his conception of historical knowledge; it is unlike the knowledge that Julius Caesar is dead, or that Rome was not built in a day, or that thirteen is a prime number, or that a week has seven days; nor yet is it like knowledge of how to ride a bicycle or engage in statistical research or win a battle. It is more like knowing what it is to be poor, to belong to a nation, to be a revolutionary, to be converted to a religion, to fall in love, to be seized by nameless terror, to be delighted by a work of art. I give these examples only as analogies, for Vico is interested not in the experience of individuals but in that of entire societies. It is this kind of collective self-awareness - what men thought, imagined, felt, wanted, strove for in the face of physical nature at a particular stage of social development, expressed by institutions, monuments, symbols, ways of writing and speech, generated by their efforts to represent and explain their condition to themselves - that he wished to analyse, and he thought he had found a path to it not trodden by others. (Berlin 1990: 62)

This elaboration of Vico contains a rich description of resources available to describe solidarity and offers, in my view, advances on Rorty. I shall allege that much of this presupposes the prior work of metaphor.

I leave this section on Vico with this blunt description of a significant change of affairs resulting from Vico's particular attack on the philosophical values of the Enlightenment.

One of the most interesting corollaries of the application of Vico's method of reconstructing the past is what I have called cultural pluralism - a panorama of a variety of cultures, the pursuit of different, and sometimes incompatible, ways of life, ideals, standards of value. This, in turn, entails that the perennial idea of the perfect society, in which truth, justice, freedom, happiness, virtue coalesce in their most perfect forms, is not merely Utopian (which few deny), but intrinsically incoherent; for if some of these values prove to be incompatible, they cannot -

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1 S. T. Coleridge, who read Vico during his extended visit to Italy, makes much use of fantasy in his work, his lectures and his *Bibliographia* (Coleridge, 1983). Coleridge, when asked why he attended Davy's chemistry lectures, replied that he wanted to renew his stock of metaphors.



conceptually cannot - coalesce. Every culture expresses itself in works of art, of thought, in ways of living and action, each of which possesses its own character which can neither be combined nor necessarily form stages of a single progress towards a single universal goal. (Berlin 1990: 65)

## Herder

Vico's views were not fully effective until the 19th century but views in some respects similar to his were held by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), born in the year Vico died. Herder's application was not the diachronic one of Vico, but rather the synchronic, through which he came to celebrate difference in cultures and provided an intellectual basis for the beginnings of anthropology and ethnology.

"While still an animal, man already has language" (p. 87) The ambiguity here should not long delay us. According to his journal, Herder probably wrote the entire essay in a little under three weeks, finishing it just before Christmas 1770. It was written for a prize offered by the Berlin Academy of Science, under the title question "Are men, left to their natural faculties, in a position to invent language, and by what means do they, by themselves, accomplish that invention?" His formulation is of a piece with his determination not to consider 'origins', but only evolution. On this Moran remarks:

Here now we have touched upon the fundamental dilemma in all of Herder's thought. Nothing can arise unless it exists; There can be no "origin" in an absolute sense. Yet, everything evolves, and if our probing thought pursues a line of evolution beyond its visible portion, it reaches - in going back - a point it must call the beginning. At such junctures Goethe's classical sense of measure made him stop. From the German word for 'origin', which is *Ursprung*, he took the prefix "ur-" and used it to suggest - even to assert - that, once it was combined with a given phenomenon, probing the origin of that phenomenon was as meaningless as to ask, 'Who made God?' (Herder 1966: 171)

Herder's translations of folk-poetry alerted him to culture otherwise hidden from the writers of the Enlightenment who were promoting rationality and the universal. Holding language as expressive of the character of the nation, Herder supposed that the individual develops to the fullest only as a member of a culture with its shared practices.

For my purposes, Herder's perceptions are most welcome in my attempt to try to think of metaphor as linked in the first place to events and action. Berlin puts it as:

The only identification that Herder never abandons is that of thought and action, language and activity. (Berlin 2000: 195)

Poetry, particularly early epic poetry, is for him, pure activity. (p. 195) Berlin connects this doubly with an experience of a storm at sea (not, I think, alluded to by Blumenberg though several other remarks made by Herder, within the shipwreck metaphor, are included in his study) on a voyage between Riga and Nantes where: "he observed the sailors during the rough seas... Words rhythms, actions are aspects of a single experience. These are commonplaces today, but (despite Vico) they were far from being such in Herder's time." (Berlin 2000: 195)

Berlin offers me further encouragement to believe that ethnography provides the possibility of revealing the links between identity, language and metaphor, which though compatible with Rorty's view are not fully stated by him:

Herder's thought is dominated by his conviction that among the basic needs of men, as elemental as that for food or procreation or communication, is the need to belong to a group. (Berlin 1990: 244)

As the last of the writers in German in this section I offer this extract from Berlin commenting on Fichte:

Descartes and Locke are evidently mistaken – the mind is not a wax tablet upon which nature imprints what she pleases, it is not an object, but a perpetual activity which shapes its world to respond to its ethical demands. It is the need to act that generates consciousness of the actual world: "We know because we are called upon to act, not the other way about." A change in my notion of what should be will change my world. The world of the poet (this is not Fichte's language) is different from the world of the banker, the world of the rich is not the world of the poor; the world of the fascist is not the world of the liberal, the world of those who think and speak in German is not the world of the French. Fichte goes further: values, principles, moral and political goals, are not objectively given, not imposed on the agent by nature or a transcendent God; 'I am not determined by my end: the end is determined by me.' Food does not create hunger, it is my hunger that makes it food. This is new and revolutionary. (Berlin 1990: 226)

The reversals which Fichte offers here are reminiscent of Vico's own, though I cannot offer an argument to suggest that they were arrived at by a route through metaphor! I take much support from the idea that the normal relationship between knowledge and action may be understood as reversed.

In turning next to Nietzsche, I would like to leave this section concerned with German writers of the Romantic period with one of Nietzsche's English precursors. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) in *A Defence of Poetry*, provided a telling connection between metaphor, language and culture:

Language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until words, which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thought instead of pictures of integral thoughts: and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have thus been disorganised, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse (Shelley 1968: 18).

## Chapter 4

### In Relation to Nietzsche

*To say, with Nietzsche, that God is dead, is to say that we serve no higher purposes. The Nietzschean substitution of self-creation for discovery substitutes a picture of the hungry generations treading each other down for a picture of humanity approaching closer and closer to the light. A culture in which Nietzschean metaphors were literalized would be one which took for granted that philosophical problems are as temporary as poetical problems, that there are no problems which bind the generations together into a single natural kind called "humanity." A sense of human history as the history of successive metaphors would let us see the poet, in the generic sense of the maker of new words, the shaper of new languages, as the vanguard of the species. Richard Rorty (CIS: 20)*

*Is it not paradoxical to make use of concepts in writing on a philosopher who privileges metaphor? Sarah Kofman (Kofman 1993: 3)*

Writing on metaphor in Nietzsche presents many difficulties and Kofman raises an unavoidable question which, following a brief discussion, she answers by concluding that:

It seems to me more Nietzschean to write conceptually in the knowledge that a concept has no greater value than a metaphor and is itself a condensate of metaphors, to write while opening up one's writing to a genealogical decipherment, than to write metaphorically while denigrating the concept and proposing metaphor as the norm. (Kofman 1993: 3)

Later in the same paragraph Kofman adds two significant qualifications:

Whether writing is conceptual or metaphorical (and since Nietzsche the opposition has hardly applied any longer), the essential thing is to be able to laugh at it, to be at enough of a distance from it to make fun of it. (Kofman 1993: 3)

Taking Kofman's remarks to heart, I wish to consider next that passage from the *Nachlass* in which is perhaps the most-quoted remark by Nietzsche on metaphor:

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified,

transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. (Nietzsche 1979: 84) <sup>1</sup>

This passage is often treated as if it were simply as yet another of Nietzsche's aphorisms which may be removed from its context and allowed to stand alone. I wish to treat it otherwise by reading it within the text in which it appears.

Not published in Nietzsche's lifetime, Breazeale ascribes *Truth and Lie in the Non-moral Sense* (TL) to 1873, that is to say, after the first edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, perhaps during the *Untimely Meditations* and before *Human, all too Human*. In his Preface to the 1986 version of *Human, all too Human*, Nietzsche writes:

When, in the third *Untimely Meditation*, I then went on to give expression to my reverence for my first and only educator, the *great* Arthur Schopenhauer - I would now express it much more strongly, also more personally - I was, so far as my own development was concerned, already deep in the midst of moral scepticism and destructive analysis, *that is to say in the critique and likewise the intensifying of pessimism as understood hitherto*, and already 'believed in nothing any more', as the people puts it, not even in Schopenhauer: just at that time I produced an essay I have refrained from publishing, 'On Truth and Falsehood in an Extra-Moral Sense'. (Nietzsche 1996: 209)

This passage is important to Breazeale who takes it as evidence affirming the continuity of Nietzsche's development in this period, and as evidence that Nietzsche is himself able to offer evidence in terms of his own unpublished writings. In view of some of the charges levelled at Nietzsche, some connected with his syphilis and its connection with progressive brain deterioration, it is useful to have evidence of connections within Nietzsche's intellectual development, or perhaps, less evaluatively, change.

Nietzsche begins *Truth & Lie* by presenting his reader with a brief fable:

Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. ... After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die. (Nietzsche 1979: 79)

An unsettling narrative, a mixture of a familiar form furnished with a perverse strangeness. Beasts, as we know them, do not live on gaseous bodies. Earth is known to us as something once gaseous, now cooled and congealed and supporting life. Nietzsche describes a reversal of what we believe to be the case. What sense are we expected to attach to 'after nature had a drawn a

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1 This section relies on the translation and notes by Daniel Breazeale (Nietzsche 1979) whose work will not here be systematically problematized - interpretation has to stop somewhere?

few breaths,'? In short, the rhetoric of Nietzsche's fable leads me to render all the terms problematic, with the possible exception of 'knowing', it being the only term which, paradoxically, remains stable and used non-problematically. However else we may understand a fable, it always stands as an invitation to see one thing as something else - it is at least metaphorical. I am invited to see myself as one of the clever(?) beasts all of whom will have to die. In current idiom: "End of story", or perhaps, and ironically, "Well, no change there then". We may, of course, ignore the story, and decline or refuse the invitation. But I have cheated slightly, I shortened the fable by omitting:

That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of "world history," but nevertheless, it was only a minute.

An authorial gloss introducing two terms, both of which qualify 'knowing'. In a single sentence Nietzsche holds up for inspection several thousand years of the Judeo-Christian tradition of Man having dominion over 'nature', together with the related eschatology, and questions both the value of knowledge and the veracity of knowers.

Commenting on his own putative fable Nietzsche writes:

One might invent such a fable, and yet he still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. There were eternities during which it did not exist. And when it is all over with the human intellect, nothing will have happened. (Nietzsche 1979: 79)

Seeming not to trust it to do the job he wanted it to do, Nietzsche elaborates, one might say literalizes, his fable. It is the intellect, for Nietzsche, that makes man's existence tolerable for that minute: "For without this (intellect) they would have every reason to flee this existence as quickly as Lessing's son."<sup>1</sup> The intellect "unfolds its principal powers in dissimulation, which is the means by which weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves" (Nietzsche 1979: 80). Nietzsche's question will shortly be: "Given this situation, where in the world could the drive for truth have come from?" For later behaviourists, this would be an uninteresting question, but for Nietzsche, just post Darwin, it will be necessary to give an account which can bridge the gap from other animals to humans, and it is the art of dissimulation which Nietzsche uses to provide part of the bridge. Dissimulation reaches its peak in man and includes:

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1 Breazeale notes that this is a reference to the offspring of Lessing and Eva König, who died on the day of his birth.

Deception, flattering, lying, deluding, talking behind the back, putting up a false front, living in borrowed splendour, wearing a mask, hiding behind convention, playing a role for others and for oneself - in short, a continuous fluttering around the *solitary* flame of vanity.” (Nietzsche 1979: 80)

Nietzsche is being consistent in summarizing the empirical claims in a metaphor - reversing the normal direction (which Black didn't notice) and this moth metaphor is important in its symbol of death - some other consideration will have to overcome these self-destructive acts. The link will be provided from Hobbes or, perhaps better, from a modification of Hobbes:

Insofar as the individual wants to maintain himself against the other individuals, he will under natural circumstances employ the intellect mainly for dissimulation. But at the same time, from boredom and necessity, man wishes to exist socially and with the herd; therefore, he needs to make peace and strives accordingly to banish from this world at least the most flagrant *bellum omni contra omnes*. (Nietzsche 1979: 81)

The contrast between truth and lie arises, says Nietzsche, in this striving. “The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real.” Though Nietzsche does not make the point, this link between words and things appearing as real, applies as well to the enquirer, or the Kuhnian revolutionary scientist, as to the liar. To be designated as liar is, at this point, a non-moral designation. Nietzsche's own example, however, confirms this: “He says, for example, ‘I am rich,’ when the proper designation for his condition would be ‘poor.’” (Nietzsche 1979: 81) A general statement follows:

(The liar) misuses fixed conventions by means of arbitrary substitutions or even reversals of names. (Nietzsche 1979: 81)

Later, this description will apply to all as, in effect, a description of metaphor.

The key point is made with a double articulation. Nietzsche writes:

If (the liar) does this in a selfish and moreover harmful manner, society will cease to trust him and will thereby exclude him. What men avoid by excluding the liar is not so much being defrauded as it is being harmed by means of fraud. Thus even at this stage, what they hate is basically not deception itself, but rather the unpleasant, hated consequences of certain sorts of deception. (Nietzsche 1979: 81)

Nietzsche is building his case very slowly but, in my view, very surely. He is quite clear that breaking convention, deception and lies are not in themselves to be condemned, his response being pragmatic rather than moral. But with the next two steps I have difficulty. Nietzsche writes:

It is in a similarly restricted sense that man now wants nothing but truth: he desires the pleasant, life-preserving consequences of truth. (Nietzsche 1979: 81)

I wonder if I am alone in supposing that in wanting 'the pleasant, life-preserving consequences' man earns Nietzsche's displeasure, even contempt: or should we adopt an explanation in terms of irony? Nietzsche makes it plain that he distinguishes here between truth and knowledge. Man is "indifferent toward pure knowledge which has no consequences; towards those truths which are possibly harmful and destructive he is even hostilely inclined." So far so good, but then comes Nietzsche's use of forgetting:

It is only by means of forgetfulness that men can ever reach the point of fancying himself to possess a "truth" of the grade just indicated. (Nietzsche 1979: 81)

It is with this notion of forgetting that I have difficulty. Knowing how Nietzsche will use this idea later, I vacillate between wondering whether Nietzsche, too, knew how he would use this term, and it is here 'written in' to his essay as a piece of over-prepared ground (argument) or whether his 'discovery' happened in the way his essay implies. Perhaps I am simply caught in the position Nietzsche wants his reader: forced to come to one's own conclusion. If so, then I conclude here that if I had been writing the essay, I might have used 'forgetfulness' but only as itself a metaphor. It is 'as-if' that "it is only by means of forgetfulness that men can ever..." It feels unsatisfactory to describe metaphor in terms of other metaphors, yet I know of no alternative. It just seems to be clearer to make the 'as-if' explicit. In this example, we could try an alternative and say 'It is as-if by means of ignoring...' but this also seems too active an alternative. This dilemma is resolved by recalling that Nietzsche is, on his own word, presenting us with a fable. Perhaps the relationship is even closer than I take Nietzsche to be describing. It might be that the relationship with others is more important than its articulation - a relationship which Nietzsche understands to be both necessary and dangerous, perhaps so dangerous that even attempts at its articulation are too risky to confront? It is in this - I think it is a common practice to use the term 'moment' here, a term which is acceptable to me provided that includes 'place' and 'situation' - that language develops, and that this moment is dangerous, or potentially so.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Cooper turns the notion of forgetting into an attack upon Nietzsche. In discussing the 'primacy' of metaphor Cooper, having remarked that "some metaphors refuse to die, to pass into idiom or whatever, despite their longevity; and clear, too, that others do die although people are hardly oblivious of their past metaphorical life", goes on to say "Much worse than this, though, Nietzsche's story is not coherent. People can only forget that a use was metaphorical if at some time they had been aware that it was



Perhaps these notions have a significant, but complex, relation to the need to manage the intra-specific aggression. Truth is then definable as an aspect of languaging which serves to keep us safe from each other. I cannot say with confidence that this is what Nietzsche intends, but it seems to be to be a scenario worth pursuing<sup>1</sup>.

It is to this 'moment' that many other lines point, and Nietzsche begins to elaborate some.

If he will not be satisfied with truth in the form of tautology, that is to say, if he will not be content with empty husks, then he will always exchange truths for illusions. (Nietzsche 1979: 81)

Nietzsche here seems to approve the choice of illusion, in preference to the philosopher's analytic truths, an anti-Kantian sentiment, if that is to be the choice. I will consciously go along with an illusion - we tend to label this 'collusion' - in order not to appear to threaten another whom I judge to be a potential danger, or other significant cost. Do not many children also learn this as a skill in respect of an aggressive parent, as part of their developmental tasks, at least in the period of adolescence?

After a few comments dismissing some views of language in relation to truth, Nietzsche continues:

The "thing in itself" (which is precisely what the pure truth, apart from any of its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and something not in the least worth striving for. (Nietzsche 1979: 82)

A new player emerges onto Nietzsche's stage here, the 'creator of language'. It remains ambiguous as to whether this 'creator' might be an anthropomorphism, or may stand for persons generally, or may yet require further elaboration. Nietzsche's rhetoric relies upon the continued activity of his Aristotelian reader, even though his own use of psychology is not entirely a constructivist one. This creator, we are told "only designates the relations of things to men, and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors." (Nietzsche 1979: 82) This is the first mention of metaphor, which is the normal translation of *übertragen* which, I take it, has in

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this. But they could only have had this awareness if they were able to distinguish metaphorical from literal use". In so arguing, Cooper takes Nietzsche's fable to be an account in 'scientific', 'logical', terms. My view of understanding metaphor in relation to its usage, undermines Cooper's criticism of Nietzsche, even if we regard Cooper's criteria as legitimate.

- 1 The 'function' of the metaphor in this context, is partly to provide just enough sense of intimacy to enable the negotiation. Perhaps much order is 'constructed' on such lines? Perhaps definitions of the situation are negotiated with identity at risk? Order, identity and definitions of situations are inter-related, the more so in conditions of competition. A form of conversation offering intimacy would have the advantage of a Darwinian survival value.

German a use very closely related to Aristotle's notion of 'carrying across' a literal (if that word is acceptable in this context) translation of the Greek '*meta - pherein*' and should probably be distinguished at this point from the common usage of 'metaphor' in English. Nietzsche helps us do this:

To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor. (Nietzsche 1979: 82)

It seems from these two sentences that we might, with little loss, substitute 'transposed', or substitute the social theorist's favourite 'transformed'. In further elaboration of what he has in mind, Nietzsche continues:

One can imagine a man who is totally deaf and has never had a sensation of sound or music. Perhaps such a person will gaze with astonishment at Chladni's sound figures; perhaps he will discover their causes in the vibrations of the string and will now swear that he must know what men mean by "sound." (Nietzsche 1979: 82) <sup>1</sup>

Seduced by Nietzsche, we take his reference to Chladni and the deaf man to be an elucidation of '*übertragen*', but he has more uses for this image:

It is this way with all of us concerning language: we believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things - metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities. In the same way that the sound appears as a sand figure, so the mysterious X of the thing in itself first appears as a nerve stimulus, then as an image, and finally as a sound. (Nietzsche 1979: 82-3)

The notion of metaphor is called upon to do even more work here. In the sense of *übertragen* that Nietzsche is using, language is inescapably metaphorical in its origins, which he now goes some way to confirm:

Thus the genesis of language does not proceed logically in any case, and all the material within and with which the man of truth, the scientist, and the philosopher later work and build, if not derived from cloud-cuckoo-land, is at least not derived from the essence of things. (Nietzsche 1979: 83)

It is probably worth trying to review the threads with which Nietzsche is weaving.

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1 Breazeale writes in his introduction (p. xxix): "(Nietzsche) discovered a physical illustration in the acoustical experiments of Chladni, in which sounds were "transferred" into sand patterns on a flat surface" (see p.24 n. 55). Ernst Florens Friedrich Chladni (1756-1827), German physicist, one of the founders of scientific acoustics. His "sound figures" (sometimes called "Chladni figures" or "sand figures") are patterns made on a sand-covered flat surface by the sonic vibrations produced by a string affixed below the plane. Nietzsche was greatly taken by this particular experimental device and frequently used it as a metaphor for perception.

A claim that his views on metaphor, *inter alia*, derive in a significant way from his strong personal relationship to Schopenhauer, a radically problematized notion of 'Man' coupled to a view of language growing in a context of dangerously ambiguous human relations, which is connected, in turn, with a view of knowledge, its links to categorization, including an undermining of epistemology, arrived at through processes of more or less deliberate falsehood, and/or the acceptance of illusions. It is as-if Nietzsche expects us to hold these threads ready to weave something of our own.

Only at this point, only with this list of topics woven to provide the context, does Nietzsche write those lines with which we began:

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. (Nietzsche 1979: 84)

Not all the blanks have been filled in. Metaphors we now know about, but this is the first mention of metonymy, but we may, without too much difficulty, identify it with those processes chosen as alternatives to analytic truth, the "empty husks". The metonymies, as do metaphors, find themselves chosen within the context of the dangerous relationships with others. Truth, a mobile army (as another translation has it) of metaphors.... seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. In the process of Nietzsche's rhetoric, we may notice, the dangerous fellow-specifcs have become 'a people'. A very convenient transformation. A transformation all the more remarkable when considered in relation to Nietzsche's parallelism here, for he continues:

Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins. (Nietzsche 1979: 84)

Nietzsche here offers two parallel descriptions, rhetorically strengthening the movable host of metaphors. Earlier I entered a *caveat* about Nietzsche's use of forgetting, and admitted to my preparedness to use it metaphorically, but here, I think, the use is literal, albeit in the service of metaphor. I prefer to say here that it is as-if truths are illusions and it is as-if we have forgotten that they are illusions. This removes any necessity to provide evidence of an earlier awareness of the kind implied by Nietzsche, as also had Vico. Nietzsche goes on to offer yet another

parallelism and in doing so offers the analogy of the coins which have lost their faces and are now considered as simply the base metal. The three parallel statements are strong when taken together, accounting no doubt for the memorable quality of the passage. But together, do they not modify Nietzsche's earlier statement about metaphor ameliorating the *bellum omni contra omnes*? If they are no longer metaphors, then would we not agree that they are no longer providing the cultivation of intimacy - let me elide Cohen and Nietzsche for this purpose? So it would seem. But is there not something else concealed here? I am reminded of the processes described by T. S. Kuhn by which revolutionary science is transformed into normal science, and by the process by which new vocabulary is formed, that is by the metaphors 'dying'. Let us suppose, for the sake of example, that a metaphor has successfully been used, let us suppose that, in consequence, two things happen, (a) the intimacy is enhanced and the likelihood of aggression diminished, and that some joint action takes place, and that (b) the metaphorical term begins the process - in whatever form that might be - towards becoming new vocabulary in the ways considered above. It is at least plausible that the new vocabulary provides the possibility of continued intimacy. But for one consideration. No account is so far taken of time. Little is known in practice about how quickly such processes occur. No suggestions have been made, so far as I have been able to discover, as to what variables might be considered. I cannot suggest any at this time, and the only procedures, within the social sciences, that I can believe will shed any light will be those employed in ethnography and in related endeavours.

Nietzsche, meanwhile, is still not satisfied that he has completed his tapestry:

We still do not yet know where the drive for truth comes from. For so far we have heard only of the duty which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. (Nietzsche 1979: 84)

We might take the view that Nietzsche is being unnecessarily modest in respect of that first sentence. But it would seem that the key word is 'drive', part of the lexicon developing around the (contemporary) evolutionary biology. The tension between these two sentences reflects claims and counter claims about disciplinary priority, and it seems from this pair of sentences that Nietzsche is about to prefer the 'drive' from nature, than the 'stick' or 'carrot' from society. Continuing his aphoristic style, a rhetorical device substituting for the argument expected from a writer of a more rationalist stance, Nietzsche continues:

Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. (Nietzsche 1979: 84)

Perhaps it is not entirely mistaken to suppose that Nietzsche's 'overman' may be detected here as the one who, standing out against "the herd" refuses to 'forget', and to see this as the beginnings of the 'aristocratic' theme, or analogy, which Nietzsche will later pursue. There is more to this, as he continues:

Now man of course forgets that this is the way things stand for him. Thus he lies in the manner indicated, unconsciously and in accordance with habits that are centuries old; and precisely *by means of this unconsciousness* and forgetfulness he arrives at his sense of truth. (Nietzsche 1979: 84)

Risking a charge of 'eisegesis', we might notice that in this last sentence Nietzsche has introduced, in effect, two new terms. Whereas we once had 'forgetfulness', we now also have 'unconsciously' which, on its own, is quite unremarkable, but when it is raised to the status of a tool, "by means of this unconsciousness", if not quite raised to agency, we have an interesting metaphor, of which Freud took an unacknowledged advantage.

How seriously should we regard this? To begin an answer to this question I would like to stand back from Nietzsche's tapestry and look for a while at a piece by Ted Cohen, in which he drew attention to similarities between metaphors and jokes, and to the experience which he calls the cultivation of intimacy.

### **Cohen and the Cultivation of Intimacy**

At the symposium at the University of Chicago in February 1978, Ted Cohen briefly introduced his subject by reference to:

a very strong line in Western philosophy especially in that strain running from British empiricism through Vienna positivism, which has denied to metaphors and their study any philosophical seriousness of the first order." (p. 1) <sup>1</sup>

Cohen then sets himself a rhetorical task. He invites us to consider a relatively mundane metaphor, one "about which there would be little quarrel", one which "can be paraphrased literally with so little remainder as makes no difference", and then asks, "Why might you, or anyone, use this metaphor instead of a literal remark?" He considers a number of what he takes to be non-controversial possibilities, but then adds:

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<sup>1</sup> Published in the Autumn issue of *Critical Inquiry* (Volume 5, number 1). Page references to Cohen are to the collection: *On Metaphor*. (Sacks, 1979)

I want to suggest a point in metaphor which is independent of the question of its cognitivity and which has nothing to do with its aesthetical character. I think of this point as the achievement of intimacy. There is a unique way in which the maker and the appreciator of a metaphor are drawn closer to one another. Three aspects are involved: (1) the speaker issues a kind of concealed invitation; (2) the hearer expends a special effort to accept the invitation; and (3) this transaction constitutes the acknowledgment of a community. All three are involved in any communication, but in ordinary literal discourse their involvement is so pervasive and routine that they go unremarked. The use in metaphor throws them into relief, and there is point in that. (p. 6)<sup>1</sup>

A critic may reply that literal language is also capable of cultivating intimacy, even though unremarked, and that nothing special to be attributed to metaphor on this account. But Cohen is ready with his reply:

There is certainly intimacy in the literal use of language. Not even the most routine literal exchanges are passive - on either side. And the idea that language, used only literally, keeps us from really reaching one another's minds - because language is conventional and static, predetermining what can be said regardless of what we may want to say - is typically not only a sophomoric idea, but a deeply confused and mistaken one (p. 7)

Without taking this opportunity to offer examples or to expand upon this, Cohen continues:

And yet sometimes there is this wish to say something special, not to arouse, insinuate, or mislead, and not to convey an exotic meaning, but to initiate explicitly the cooperative act of comprehension which is, in any view, something more than a routine act of understanding. (p. 7)

There seem to be a number of points which may be made about this view. As I read Cohen here, he is making a claim about something akin to exoticism, in spite of trying explicitly to eliminate it as he has done above. It may not be an "exotic meaning", but the languaging is, in effect, exotic. What he is describing is a variety of the common phenomenon of 'secret' or 'closed' or 'semi-closed' vocabularies - professionally referred to as 'jargon', vocabularies which variously enhance professionalization, identify a stranger as a previously unknown member of an organized grouping or, more crudely, simply to exclude the outsider. Read this way, such

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1 This view of metaphor is not, however, entirely new, it has been alluded to by others. Commenting on a Shakespearean metaphor Terence Hawkes remarks: "The pattern of thought it proposes is, as it were, referred from Shakespeare's mind to our own, and requires our participation to 'complete' it. It draws us in, involves us in its own process, gives us the responsibility for the creative act of closure with itself. This vitalizes the metaphor. As Coleridge says, in one of his many brilliantly illuminating comments on Shakespeare, 'You feel him to be a poet, inasmuch as for a time he has made you one - an active creative being.' " (Hawkes, 1972: 49)

Boswell records a remark of Johnson which combines Black with Cohen, on 19th September 1777 :

JOHNSON: ...And, sir, as to metaphorical expression, that is a great excellence in style, when it is used with propriety, for it gives you two ideas for one; - conveys the meaning more luminously, and generally with a perception of delight. (Boswell, 1899)

vocabularies are further evidence of the significance of metaphor.<sup>1</sup>

Cohen provides further argument:

The sense of close community results not only from the shared awareness that a special invitation has been given and accepted, but also from the awareness that not everyone could make that offer or take it up. In general, and with some obvious qualifications, it must be true that all literal language is accessible to all those whose language it is. But a figurative use can be inaccessible to all but those who share information about one another's knowledge, beliefs intentions, and attitudes. I think the community can be as small as you like, even a solitary pair... even smaller: surely the self-dialogue of the soul is often figurative. (p. 7-8)

These limitations, "that not everyone could make that offer or take it up" will be a significant qualification when we come to look at Rorty's controversial suggestions in CIS<sup>2</sup>. That "the community can be as small as you like, even a solitary pair" will suggest connections to Davidson's more recent thoughts on language. Metaphor has the ability, it seems to me, successfully to issue an invitation to its hearers to move from the present language game to another, the acceptance of which creates/reinforces a social relation in the way Cohen suggests<sup>3</sup>. Uncomfortably for me, Cohen's "surely the self-dialogue of the soul is often figurative" nevertheless is suggestive of Davidson's "metaphor is the dreamwork of language" and through

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- 1 Cohen refers readers to a study by Martin Joos, *The Five Clocks*, which discusses ways in which intimacy is achieved by means of linguistic style, a study not concerned with figurative language, but with the use of 'incorrect' language - jargon, for instance.
  - 2 The significance which Cohen places upon the 'cultivation of intimacy' also provides a suggestion as to why Aristotle might have thought "fine language to be not entirely appropriate for slaves." (1404b13)
  - 3 A personal anecdote by way of illustration:  
A(1): referring to a newspaper report that Bill Gates of Microsoft (estimated wealth at the time \$38Bn.) has bought a house in London together with two adjacent mews properties: "He will probably use the mews properties as garages and accommodation for his security staff..."  
B(1): "Probably."  
A(2): "... and have Cambridge for his toy-room." (a reference to a very large gift of laboratories and continuing financial support to the University of Cambridge.)  
B(2): "And Scotland for his stables!" (laughter all round)(B is a Scot living in England, A is English)  
There being no metaphor in A(1), B's reply is mundane. A(2) introduces a clear metaphor into which B moves and extends it. There was immediate laughter by both. This seems to me to be typical of much conversation.
    - (i) We have a new image of Scotland - the word will not be quite the same again for the speaker and hearer.
    - (ii) We have a new association for Scotland - the word will not be quite the same again for the speaker and hearer.
    - (iii) We have fresh associations for Cambridge and its University.
    - (iv) The social connections between A & B are strengthened.
    - (v) By extension, from (iv), perhaps the social connections between England and Scotland are strengthened?

that, of almost all of Freud's project, which returns us to Nietzsche? Perhaps, but not without at least two qualifications. Cohen makes clearer than does Nietzsche that, insofar as metaphor is construed as limiting the intra-species aggression, it acts in limited ways, for example, only among those who already share some related experience - this, in turn requires further qualification to cover examples where a hearer arrives at something not initially part of the speaker's intention, that is to say a qualification concerning the vocabularies and their usual construals. Secondly, not only does metaphor divide the hearers into those who do, or do not, 'get' the metaphor, but metaphor can also have the effect of hurting - Cohen refers to 'hostile' metaphors and to cruel jokes. Nietzsche's view would require qualification before recommendation.

Cohen makes an explicit analogy with jokes:

In these respects metaphors are rather like jokes. With a joke, too, there is first the realization that it is a joke and then the understanding - what's called getting the joke. ... There is not a sharp difference between understanding what the joke is and finding it funny.... the property in common with metaphors... is the capacity to form or acknowledge a community and thereby to establish an intimacy between the teller and the hearer. ... There may be more features in common. In particular, I am tempted to infer that there can be no effective procedures for dealing with metaphors. This means that there can be no routine method for (1) detecting metaphors when they appear, just as there are no foolproof rules for determining when someone is joking, or (2) unpacking the metaphor once it is known to be one, just as there is no standard method for explaining a joke. This must be related to the fact that often a paraphrase fails to the job of its metaphor in much the same way as an explanation fails to replace a joke. (p. 8-9)

Apart from noting just two points here, I do not wish to pursue this analogy further. First, that although some writers have begun to set out ways of describing the detection and processing of metaphor, i.e., Roger White (White 1996) I am inclined to accept Cohen's point particularly with regard to spoken rather than to written examples. Second, I see little point in social theory, as opposed to the use of modelling, in endeavours such as the development of computer language translation applications, in further pursuing the task of subsuming metaphor under sets of rules - my prejudices suggest that this is likely to be of little use other than for limited heuristic purposes.

In a later essay Cohen writes:

Thus I think of metaphor as the language's intrinsic capacity to surpass its own (putative) limits. (Cohen 1981: 184)



The combination of a recognition of the extension of language through metaphor, even though it does not explicitly contain a view of the 'dying' of metaphors - Nietzsche's 'effacing and forgetting' - into literalness, together with his earlier notion on metaphor as the cultivation of intimacy, seems to me to ascribe a very significant role for metaphor.<sup>1</sup>

### Nietzsche's fable continued

It is convenient to return to Nietzsche here and consider again our earlier question as to how seriously we should consider his description of the dual rise of the drive to truth and of the role of metaphor to prevent, or ameliorate '*bellum omni contra omnes*'. Nietzsche takes it seriously enough to continue to develop it:

Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can one live with any repose, security, and consistency: only by means of the petrification and coagulation of a mass of images which originally streamed from the primal faculty of human imagination like a fiery liquid, only in the invincible faith that *this sun, this window, this table* is a truth in itself, in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an *artistically creating* subject, does man live with any repose, security and consistency. If but for an instant he could escape from the prison walls of this faith, his "self-consciousness" would be immediately destroyed. (Nietzsche 1979: 86)

There is much in these two sentences which provides material for comment, but I will limit it here to some of the more readily available. The structure of the main sentence seems to be significant, the parallelism is overly emphasised. We are also confronted by Nietzsche's paradox that man can live secure "only by forgetting that he himself is an *artistically creating* subject". I have earlier described Nietzsche's use of psychology as "not being an entirely constructivist one", which probably stands in need of qualification in response to his remark about the "artistically creating subject". We have probably returned to Aristotle here, with Nietzsche wanting to qualify the view of man found in Aristotle. It is here also that I find myself somewhat at odds with Nietzsche. He seems to be suggesting that all men, by nature, are "artistically creating", but that in order to survive *bellum omni contra omnes* a kind of forgetting is required, a forgetting which is necessarily unconscious, and that this forgetting is a requirement placed upon individuals by their culture. This combination is difficult for me to unravel.

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1 Cohen shows no sign in his paper of being economical with his attributions of authorship and is clearly acquainted with a wide range of classical and modern writers on metaphor, but no mention is made of Nietzsche. The closest he comes is a recognition of Paul de Man's contribution (de Man 1978) which, although it makes brief reference to *Truth and Lie*, precedes his *Allegory of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*, which followed a year after the Chicago symposium.

There is a strong suggestion, later in the same paragraph, that Nietzsche supposes that the “artistically creating” is also a component of human seeing, a seeing which is unlike that of other animals, and that this same “artistically creating” subject understands himself in the same way. Which, in turn, gives rise to Nietzsche’s remark about ‘self-consciousness’ being destroyed. I read this to indicate that the consequence of ‘failing to forget’ is that our identity-to-ourselves is thereby rendered permanently problematic. I have no immediate difficulty with this. One simply substitutes alternative metaphors, as seem appropriate, and then works with them, in an analogue of Kuhn’s vision of the revolutionary scientist. But this presents a problem within Nietzsche’s view of the relation of metaphor and ‘*bellum omni contra omnes*’. To what extent, then, might we prefer Cohen’s proposal to Nietzsche’s here? Part of an answer will rest upon the extent to which we suppose that Nietzsche is elaborating a fable, or giving a combined account of evolutionary biology and history. Let us put off further consideration of that point until we have heard Nietzsche out.

Any question as to the comparative veracity of the human and the animal seeing is, says Nietzsche, “quite meaningless” (Nietzsche 1979: 86) for this:

... would have to be decided previously in accordance with the criterion of the *correct perception*, which means, in accordance with a criterion which is *not available*. But in any case it seems to me that “the correct perception” - which would mean “the adequate expression of an object in the subject” - is a contradictory impossibility. (Nietzsche 1979: 86)

I take it that the “contradictory impossibility” is a term to suggest that the “artistically creating” subject is projecting something towards the object as well as receiving something from it, within the process of seeing. A state of affairs which leads to Nietzsche’s unusual (in this essay) personal confession undermining a major philosophical tradition:

“Appearance” is a word that contains many temptations, which is why I avoid it as much as possible. For it is not true that the essence of things “appears” in the empirical world. (Nietzsche 1979: 86-7)

Nietzsche resolves his problem about the ‘drive’ for truth by attributing it to a prior drive, which he introduces as:

The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself. (Nietzsche 1979: 88-9)

Nietzsche has lot of work in mind for this 'drive' to accomplish and, of necessity, has to be fit for its purposes. First of all it is hardy and imprisoned:

This drive is not truly vanquished and scarcely subdued by the fact that a regular and rigid new world is constructed as its prison from its own ephemeral products, the concepts. (Nietzsche 1979: 89)

This short sentence may be taken as an example of the power of metaphor. Metaphor operates as-if embattled - who are its enemies? Metaphor is able to survive and continue to be effective in spite of being held within a rational and rigid prison, coextensive with the known world, the known world being, not simply its product, but its "ephemeral" product. The products of metaphor, the concepts, the tools of rationality and technology, are but as lace-wings, or mayflies, whose existence is but momentary - again a reversal of what we might otherwise take for granted. Surely, the casual reader supposes, this exaggeration is simply for rhetorical effect. But a second thought brings to mind Pepper's writing on metaphor and 'World Hypotheses' (Pepper 1942), in which certain 'root metaphors' significantly outlast the particular technologies to which they have given rise<sup>1</sup>.

Trapped within its prison, Nietzsche's newly anthropomorphized metaphor-creating drive:

seeks a new realm and another channel for its activity, and finds this in *myth* and in *art* generally. (Nietzsche 1979: 89)

Hannibal Lector-like, the metaphor-creating drive, fast within his prison, continues to manipulate the outside world:

This drive continually confuses the conceptual categories and cells by bringing forward new transferences, metaphors, metonymies. It continually manifests an ardent desire to refashion the world which presents itself to waking man, so that it will be colourful, irregular, lacking in results and coherence, charming, and eternally new as the world of dreams. (Nietzsche 1979: 89)

Rorty's links with Nietzsche include his value judgement:

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1 Donald Schön has proposed a novel move. Instead of 'metaphor' he proposes the notion of the 'displacement of concepts'. He thereby ignores the tradition from Vico and Nietzsche, and avoids the need directly to problematize 'concept' as, for example, the adult or detritus of metaphor. Schön moved from teaching philosophy to industrial research and this book arises from noticing an analogy between theorizing and industrial invention. His notion of the displacement of concepts allows him to gather the benefits of metaphor as model, without the distress of problematizing language. It is not necessary to ask whether Schön is right to do this, it is only necessary to ask for whom this perception might be useful, and for doing what? Schön is by no means naive and he asks some difficult questions: "If 'fitting into' an organization is a metaphor, what is the nature of the process for which it is a metaphor?" (Schön, 1963: 45)

So long as it is able to deceive without *injuring*, that master of deception, the intellect, is free;  
(Nietzsche 1979: 89-90)

even though he specifically ascribes his indebtedness on this point to Judith Shklar (CIS: xv, and Shklar, 1984: 37).

That immense framework and planking of concepts to which the needy man clings his whole life long in order to preserve himself is nothing but a scaffolding and toy for the most audacious feats of the liberated intellect. And when it smashes this framework to pieces, throws it into confusion, and puts it back together in an ironic fashion, pairing the most alien things and separating the closest, it is demonstrating that it has no need of these makeshifts of indigence and that it will now be guided by intuitions rather than concepts.(Nietzsche 1979: 90)

If we may take Nietzsche's hero to be Nietzsche, then we should read this extract as a clear warning to be alert to irony. A warning that is at once a challenge. A challenge which once accepted opens the possibility of something akin to the Cohen consequences, but does so in a manner which is somewhat different from that of Cohen's own remarks on metaphor. Cohen has a picture which cultivates intimacy which leads on, as I suppose, to successful joint action. But is the cultivation of intimacy the same in the case of irony? If so, what kinds of joint action might we expect when an increasing number of 'free intellects' abound?

My resolution of the difficulties created or, as some might prefer, uncovered by Nietzsche is that it is as though there is a close, perhaps necessary, relation between Nietzsche's use of metaphor and pragmatism - a relation which will be explored further in the chapter on Richard Rorty.

### **Cooper's development of Cohen**

This cultivation of intimacy through metaphor is taken up at length by Cooper as a form of explanation as to why metaphor continues to be a feature of language - he all but removes other values. Consider some of his points:

... more often than not, the subset of people able to interpret a given 'extra-ordinary' utterance will remain relatively constant over a large range of related utterances. Sometimes, indeed, the subset will roughly constitute a recognizable group or 'world'...That which equips certain people to interpret a particular metaphor will equip them to interpret a whole range of related ones.  
(Cooper 1986: 157)

This observation, we might suppose, could help Rorty describe what he calls 'solidarity', a term which he deploys as part of his account of natural science<sup>1</sup>, and also as an account of why of the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are crossed. He does not do so.

So, in what might be called a 'full metaphorical exchange' - the utterance of a metaphor, its appropriate interpretation by hearers, and a capable assessment of that interpretation by the speaker - the intimacy between speaker and hearers presupposed by the original utterance will be reinforced. (Cooper 1986: 158-9)

Yes, I believe that this is entailed by Cohen's account. I would be disappointed if Cooper's "full metaphorical exchange" were to be taken as an adequate description of metaphor, having only an incidental relation to context and action. That said, my account stands in need of a way to distinguish what I might call the 'immediate cultivation of intimacy' from the 'consequent cultivation of intimacy'. In the first case, the cultivation comes from the immediate recognition of the metaphor, analogous to getting a joke. In the second, I think rather of that intimacy which results from a task jointly and successfully undertaken. This second, 'consequent' cultivation of intimacy I take to be a two-part event. The original recognition of the metaphor provides an initial increment in intimacy coupled, typically, with a suggestion of the means to succeed in a task. I take Mills' description of situated actions (Mills 1940) to support this later feature.

Beyond the ties of interests, background, sensibility, and so on, which a metaphor so often proposes for its interpretation, there is also the intimacy of attitude or viewpoint which is presupposed if the utterance of the metaphor, in place of something more explicit, is to be justified. (Cooper 1986: 163)

Cooper here extends the use of metaphor, rightly in my view, to belief and perception within intimacy. But I would have to add, that I think I have a somewhat different view from Cooper as to how terms like attitude and viewpoint are used, preferring a view closer to Davidson. As in Khun's description of science (Kuhn 1970), Cooper is able to set out the beginnings of a programme of empirical research:

If intimacy does sustain metaphor, then we might expect, first, that metaphorical talk will be especially marked among groups of speakers where intimacy is at a premium - as an emotional need or for more pragmatic reasons. (Cooper 1986: 164)

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1 Rorty wrote a paper, *Science as Solidarity* which was published in *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences* (Nelson, J. S. et al, 1987) and reprinted in Rorty, (1991).

In principle, this would seem to be an empirical question, but the subsequent research proposal would require some consideration of how those judgments would be made, but this need not be a fatal consideration. The previous observation might equally well be made to the following:

What needs to be added to this is that the pleasure is all the keener when the exploration is in a region to which there is a privileged access. (Cooper 1986: 165)

This observation leads towards:

If intimacy sustains metaphor, we would expect it to be reflected, to a degree that might otherwise be puzzling, in the content of metaphors. (Cooper 1986: 165)

Once reciprocity is underway, the pressure is on for it to be sustained, for the refusal by someone to engage in further metaphors of the relevant sort will be a perceived abdication from the circle of people with the interests, tastes, and attitudes in question. (Cooper 1986: 167)

Those familiar with Hemmingway's view that the writer needs "an inbuilt, shockproof crap detector" (Postman and Weingartner 1971) (p. 16) will recognize Cooper's less vivid version:

there are cases where, although there is no real 'togetherness', the illusion that there is can be fabricated and fostered ... Inflation is not disadvantageous to everyone. (Cooper 1986: 173)

Metaphor hides this and implies a greater social homogeneity than is in fact the case.

Cooper also draws attention to the 'conduit metaphor' which "provides a comforting image of human minds bound together in the concrete intimacy of physical union". If we have doubted that Cooper can find any value in metaphor he puts our minds at rest through his comment on the conduit metaphor as: "It is rhetoric's way of doing battle against solipsism" (Cooper 1986: 166).

We saw earlier that Aristotle's view was that "strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of new ideas." Perhaps only metaphor has the power to introduce new vocabulary sufficiently quickly, and at the same time, through its ability to create and sustain intimacy, to support the community of teachers and others concerned with education in their professional, and political, responses? Perhaps our endeavour to agree upon an appropriate model of the person might focus more sharply on our facility with metaphor.

## Chapter 5

### In Relation to Literature, Science and Philosophy

First published in Germany in 1985 as *Die Drei Kulturen*, Wolf Lepenies describes his study *Between Literature and Science: the Rise of Sociology* as follows:

In this book I describe the contention between two groups of intellectuals: on one hand the men of letters, i.e. the writers and critics, on the other the social scientists, above all the sociologists. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards literature and sociology contested with one another the claim to offer the key orientation for modern civilization and to constitute the guide to living appropriate to industrial society.... This competing discloses a dilemma which determined not only how sociology originated but also how it then went on to develop: it has oscillated between a scientific orientation which has led it to ape the natural sciences and a hermeneutic attitude which has shifted the discipline toward the realm of literature. (Lepenies 1988: 1)

In an index of about 1000 items, this study has no entry for metaphor, nor yet for figurative language. From my perspective, this forgone opportunity is a disappointment. In what follows, I do not aspire to make good any lost opportunity, but rather to draw attention to publications on either side of Lepenies' divide, starting from a period following that which he considered. I will later mention work done in the philosophy of natural science which has positively valued metaphor, by writers such as Max Black, Mary Hesse, Thomas Kuhn, and Rom Harré, writings which may be considered to have begun to erase the boundaries which Lepenies describes. Others, who having contributed to what might be called a debate about the extent to which the products of social science may be construed simply as forms of writing, I have in mind Howard Becker (1986), Clifford Geertz (1973), and Clifford and Marcus (1986), though referred to in the section on ethnography, will not receive the consideration which might be considered their due here. Later, I will include discussion as to ways in which one form of sociology has redescribed parts of the natural sciences as being much like any other concerted human activity, thereby

challenging the ideology of natural science. This may be expected to impinge upon the extent to which parts of the social sciences might continue, or not, to ape the natural sciences in the way that Lepenies has described. This comparatively recent change allows little other than speculation as to how this might further develop.

## 1: Views from the literary side

With *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, (CIS), a volume which has been an able parent, both a source of inspiration and a potential target for me, Rorty moved strongly towards literature and literary criticism for his tools for describing the social world and human solidarity. As a preparation for an attempt to read Rorty, I offer a brief consideration of four pieces on metaphor which may be considered to be on the literature side of Lepenies' divide. First, from I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) next, Paul Henle in *Language, Thought and Culture* (1958), then a more recent view from a philosopher looking at complex metaphor in literature, Roger White and *The Structure of Metaphor: the way the language of metaphor works*. (1996). After a brief consideration of a suggestion from David Lodge, drawing on an observation by Jakobson, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977), I turn to consider some remarks of Mikhail Bakhtin on a comparison of the monological and dialogical in writing drawing mainly on *The Dialogical Imagination* (1981).

### I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*

Richards' lectures at Bryn Mawr College in February and March 1936 and published later that year, mark the start of the revival of interest, in the English speaking world, in rhetoric and particularly in metaphor. He proposed the terms 'tenor' and 'vehicle' and 'tension', but not clearly enough for some writers. He described the need for additions to the vocabulary:

For the whole task is to compare the different relations which, in different cases, these two members of a metaphor hold to one another, and we are confused at the start if we do not know which of the two we are talking about. At present we have only some clumsy descriptive phrases with which to separate them. 'The original idea' and 'the borrowed one'; 'what is really being said or thought of' and 'what it is compared to'; 'the underlying idea' and 'the imagined nature'; 'the principal subject' and what it resembles' or, still more confusing, simply 'the meaning' and 'the metaphor' or 'the idea' and 'its image.' (Richards 1936: 96)



Richards then begins to introduce his proposed vocabulary:

We need the word 'metaphor' for the whole double unit, and to use it sometimes for one of the two components in separation from the other is as injudicious as that other trick by which we use 'the meaning' here sometimes for the work that the whole double unit does and sometime for the other component - the tenor, as I am calling it - the underlying idea or principal subject which the vehicle or figure means. (Richards 1936: 96-7)

This sentence has some claim to being at once the most helpful and the most confusing in the work on metaphor in the 20th century. Most helpful, in that the terms it proposed were the terms which most subsequent writers used in their writing. Most confusing, because without the accentuation of the voice available in the lecture, the written sentence does not distinguish unambiguously the intentions of the author. Some readers, perhaps over-influenced by their perception of metaphor as having two parts, have taken 'tenor' and 'vehicle' to be Richards' terms for those parts. This was not his intention and a closer reading shows otherwise. Richards' terms were 'tenor', 'vehicle' and 'tension'. In the simplest of examples: "Leonard is a lion", the 'tenor' is not Leonard, as some have supposed, but Leonard's bravery, the 'vehicle' being lionhood and the 'tension' being the literal incompatibility between 'Leonard' and 'lion'. The meaning of the metaphor, for Richards, is the result of the interaction between the terms 'Leonard' and 'lion', in this simple case not a demanding process. Though not unambiguous and failing to encompass the full range of metaphor, these terms nevertheless helped to re-start the study of metaphor.

It is of interest for me, that in Richards' introduction of his terms, in the passage cited immediately above, he is ambivalent as to the most appropriate term for considering metaphor as a whole. Richards puts 'scare-quotes' around 'the meaning', and prefers to speak of "the work" that the whole double unit does. I have chosen the second of these in my preference to speak of the uses for metaphor. The ambiguity remained in the literature until Davidson challenged it (Davidson 1979).

Richards offers an example of how a reading of metaphor may be applied to complex social relationships:

The psychoanalysts have shown us with their discussions of 'transference' - another name for metaphor - how constantly modes of regarding, of loving, of acting, that have developed with one set of things or people, are shifted to another. They have shown us chiefly the pathology of these transferences, cases where the vehicle - the borrowed attitude, the parental fixation, say -

tyrannizes over the new situation, the tenor, and behavior is inappropriate. The victim is unable to see the new person except in terms of the old passion and its accidents. He reads the situation only in terms of the figure, the archetypal image, the vehicle. But in healthy growth, tenor and vehicle - the new human relationship and the family constellation – cooperate freely; and the resultant behavior derives in due measure from both. Thus in happy living the same patterns are exemplified and the same risks of error are avoided as in tactful and discerning reading. The general form of the interpretative process is the same, with a small-scale instance - the right understanding of a figure of speech - or with a large-scale instance - the conduct of a friendship.[Richards, 1936: 135ff )

I shall return to this example in my discussion of Richard Rorty's CIS.

## Paul Henle

With hindsight, and not a little generosity, the opening of Henle's essay *Language, Thought & Culture* must have a claim to being one of the finest examples of meiosis known to me:

There is little new to be said on the subject of metaphor. (Henle 1958: 173)<sup>1</sup>

Less than ten years later, Wayne Booth remarked that he would wager that the year 1977 produced more titles (on the subject of metaphor) than the entire history of thought before 1940.

An ambiguous enough a sentence to be taken lightly, especially in the light of what followed:

We shall soon no doubt have more metaphoricians than metaphysicians - or should that be metamorticians, the embalmers of dead metaphor? I have in fact extrapolated with my pocket calculator to the year 2039; at that point there will be more students of metaphor than people. (Booth 1978: 47)<sup>2</sup>

What followed in Henle's essay was to influence later writing. He describes it as an attempt:

...to fit the old (truths) into a more general theory of symbolism by characterizing metaphor semantically and by showing its semantic functions. Two such functions shall engage us principally, the use to extend language to meet new situations and the poetic use to give language color and nuance. (Henle, 1958: 173)

Henle begins:

Because of the continuity in the discussions of metaphor, we may develop a characterization of it by beginning with and modifying Aristotle's explanation. [Henle, 1958: 173)

Henle's thoughts about Aristotle's "metaphor consists in giving a thing a name that belongs to something else" are as follows: (1) this should be construed very broadly, 'things' are not to be limited to physical objects, and 'name' should be taken to include any sign whatever. (2) then "it is a little more convenient to say essentially the same thing from the side of the sign rather than

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1 All citations referenced by page number only are to (Henle, 1958)

2 I include the light-heartedness of comments in this area, as humour is not irrelevant as Ted Cohen has shown. (Cohen, 1979)

from the object signified" this leads to (3) "in a metaphor a sign having a conventional sense is used in a different sense." Henle then applies these thoughts to a short passage from *Paradise Lost* where Milton says of Belial: "through his tongue/ Dropt Manna, and could make the worse appear / The better reason..." Henle comments:

Clearly (Milton) does not intend to conclude that Belial exuded food; rather, 'tongue,' 'dropt' and 'manna' are used in an unusual sense to suggest that he spoke soothingly and persuasively. Each of these words appears in a double role - first in its conventional sense such as it might have in other contexts and second in a sense characteristic of this metaphor. This is what is central in Aristotle's statement. (p. 174)

I do not wish to debate whether this last statement owes more to 'eisegesis' than to 'exegesis', but rather to draw attention to Henle's mode of explication that "each of these words appears in a double role". As far as I am aware this is the first time that metaphor has been seen this way<sup>1</sup>. Henle continues by affirming that "this duality of sense is characteristic of metaphor" and by suggesting terminology in order to "make reference to it easier". The terms he offers are 'literal sense' which "a word has in other contexts and apart from such metaphoric uses". 'Figurative sense' is taken to mean "that special sense on which the metaphor hinges." He then offers two more terms as ways of characterizing the relationship between a word and its various meanings:

This may be accomplished by saying that a word is an *immediate sign* of its literal sense and a *mediate sign* of its figurative sense. (p. 175)

Henle's subsequent claim that these terms are appropriate "since it is only through the literal sense that one arrives at the figurative" although undeniable<sup>2</sup>, is somewhat optimistic since: (a) there are no satisfactory accounts about how the metaphorical sense is arrived at and (b) this arrangement is only set up to deal with metaphor at the level of the word. Henle having pointed out the connections between Aristotle's conception of metaphor and the later terms of synecdoche and metonymy, then sets about his task of trying to assimilate metaphor to a general theory of symbolism and turns to C. S. Peirce's distinction between symbolic and iconic modes of signification.

Metaphor then becomes a particular kind of metaphoric statement whose differentia is the following: In a metaphor some terms symbolize the icon and other symbolize what is iconized. (p. 181)

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1 This is an example of meeting Rorty's contention that we have need of new descriptions.

2 This is in such a contrast to Vico, that we must doubt that Henle was aware of him.

Henle regards the outstanding feature of metaphor when considered from the point of view of the listener "is the sort of shock which it produces." (p. 182) I see similarities between this shock and that experienced when a subject 'sees' the second figure in an ambiguous figure, as for example that known as Boring's Mother-in-law; as in the use of the Duck-Rabbit by Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 1953) and to Schutz's use of shock. (Schutz and Luckmann 1974).

Having given some examples drawn from etymology to show possible/probable metaphorical derivations of terms and included that of 'plastron' (a piece of armour worn as breastplate) as the name for the undershell of a turtle, comments:

We know of no satisfactory theory as to how such terms become literal and presumably it must wait on the working out of a general theory of meaning. In cases of this sort, however, metaphor is even more important for extended language than in those considered before. After all, the undershell of a turtle is simply there and can be pointed to if necessary to call attention to it. A world order may equally be there, but it certainly cannot be pointed to in the same way. The only means of thinking about it may be the metaphor. Perhaps the new idea is inconceivable apart from the metaphor. (p. 188-9)

Following some brief remarks on reification and personification as metaphor, Henle comments:

The importance of metaphor in the development of abstract concepts similarly can only be guessed at and any more accurate determination must await further studies. (p. 189)

Henle also points out that in the same way that a term in a metaphor must have a double primary cognitive content, so also, he suggests,

...there is similarly a double feeling expressed in the metaphor but that the two are not unrelated and that the feeling accompanying the figurative sense is modified by and in fact caused by the feeling accompanying the literal sense. (p. 191)

Henle is being careful here. By speaking of a change in the feeling content, in his terms, 'caused' by the double significance of the terms, he has introduced another possibility:

We are now arguing that supervening on this initial similarity there may be an additional similarity suggested or caused by the use of the metaphor. This is the induced content. (p. 191)

Once the notion of induced content is raised and conceded - it is a metaphor from electro-magnetics - there arises the possibility of other forms of induced content, specifically cognitive. This in turn raises again the issue of paraphrase. Henle, in difficulties in resolving this, refers to Cleanth Brooks:

Let the reader try to formulate a proposition that will say what the poem 'says.' As his proposition approaches adequacy, he will find, not only has it increased in length, but that it has begun to fill itself up with reservations and qualifications - and most significant of all - the

formulator will find that he has himself begun to fall back upon metaphors of his own in his attempt to indicate what the poem "says." In sum, his proposition, as it approaches adequacy ceases to be a proposition (Brooks 1947: 181).

Henle, commenting that for Brooks "metaphors can never give way to their paraphrases" then moves to a suggestion of I. A. Richards:

In one respect at least Richards is unquestionably right. There is a sense of shock about a metaphor... which results from the clash of juxtaposed literal sense. It has almost an epigrammatic quality and this must be lost in any paraphrase. (p. 194)

Henle concludes with what seems to amount to nothing more than a restatement of the problem:

We may conclude that apart from the impact of a metaphor in presenting a conflict in so small a compass, there is no obstacle in principle to the adequate paraphrase of a metaphor though the difficulties may be very great in practice. They are least when the metaphor has become trite. (p. 195)

I think we may take it though, that Henle comes down on the side of there being a cognitive component to metaphor, just. His final sentence confirms his faith in the importance of metaphor.

Metaphors, like chemical elements display unusual powers in a nascent state (p. 195).<sup>1</sup>

No, he prefers metaphor at the last - I think.<sup>2</sup>

## Black...

There is a considerable time-gap before the publication of my next writer, chosen because in *The Structure of Metaphor* (White 1996) Roger White explicitly discusses the complex metaphors found in that writing generally referred to as 'literature'.<sup>3</sup> After some introductory remarks which includes praise of Paul Henle as having written an article of 'real distinction', White selects the influential account of metaphor by Max Black as his entry to the area he particularly wants to elaborate - that of complex metaphor.

Black's opening move had been a forbidding one:

To draw attention to a philosopher's metaphors is to belittle him - like praising a logician for his beautiful handwriting. (Black 1962: 25)<sup>4</sup>

Not unreasonably, he set out to develop his position by calling on literary critics:

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- 1 Clifford Geertz describes Henle's pages 173- 195 as: "an excellent recent review". (Geertz, 1973)
  - 2 From his pragmatist perspective, Rorty will simply interpret the unparaphrasability of metaphor as "just the unsuitability of any such familiar sentence for one's purpose." (CIS: 18)
  - 3 There is a growing corpus of work in this area, including some carefully managed empirical studies. See *Understanding Metaphor in Literature* (Steen, 1994).
  - 4 Originally published, under the same title, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 55 (1954), 273-294.

They, at least, do not accept the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit metaphor," or assume that metaphor is incompatible with serious thought. (Black 1962: 25)

Considering a simple example: "The chairman plowed through the discussion", he sees this as an example of sentence with one word "plowed" being used metaphorically and that at least one of the remaining words is used literally. Black uses this example to deploy two of his terms. He suggests that we "call the word 'plowed' the *focus* of the metaphor, and the remainder of the sentence in which that word occurs the *frame*" (Black 1962: 28). Black is sensitive to the limitations surrounding those aspects of metaphor of which he wants speak:

...I have been treating "metaphor" as a predicate properly applicable to certain expressions, *without attention to any occasions* on which the expressions are used, ...We recognize that to call a man a "cesspool" is to use a metaphor, without needing to know who uses the expression, *or on what occasions*, or with what intention. (Black 1962: 29) (*emphasis added*)<sup>1</sup>

Later he will give an example of which he says:

This is an example, though still a simple one, of how recognition and interpretation of a metaphor may require attention to the *particular circumstances* of its utterance. (Black 1962: 29)

It is of interest that the emphasis in this remark is in the original. This does not reach quite as far as I might have hoped, Black clearly recognises the significance of the social situation, but does not pay significant interest to the action(s) therein.

Continuing with his chairman 'plowing', Black says that "an intelligent hearer can easily guess what the speaker had in mind". (Black 1962: 30-1) He continues:

This account treats the metaphorical expression (let's call it "*M*") as a substitute for some other literal expression ("*L*," say) which would have expressed the same meaning, had it been used. On this view, the meaning of *M*, in its metaphorical occurrence, is just the *literal* meaning of *L*. (Black 1962: 31)

Any instance, as here, where a metaphorical expression is used in place of some equivalent *literal* expression, Black will call a "substitution view of metaphor". This leads to the question as to why anyone might want to set others a puzzle when they could speak literally. Black offers two answers. The first case would be when there is no literal equivalent, as in the case "Metaphor plugs the gaps in the literal vocabulary... so viewed, metaphor is a species of catachresis ... the

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1 Black's imagination is surely limited, it is possible for me to imagine a conversation when some attributes of a person may be discussed as to whether he deals with them as a 'sewer' or as a 'cesspool', where the conclusion is not necessarily a pejorative one.

putting of new sense into old words.” (Black 1962: 33) The second case is the question of style, decoration, the former rhetorician’s *ornatus*. This is not a satisfactory description for Black. His next move is to observe that:

If a writer holds that a metaphor consists in the *presentation* of the underlying analogy or similarity, he will be taking what I shall call a *comparison view* of metaphor. (Black 1962: 35)

Black sees the comparison view as a special case of the substitution view, and is still not satisfied:

It would be more illuminating in some of these cases to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently arising. (Black 1962: 37)

It is at this point that Black turns to I. A. Richards’ remark: “In the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a result of their interaction.” (Black 1962: 38) <sup>1</sup>, (Richards 1936: 93). Black applies this thought to a metaphor he has previously cited: “The poor are the Negroes of Europe.” He observes that neither substitution view nor the comparison view is able to express the fullness of this metaphor, whereas: “Richards says that our ‘thoughts’ about European poor and American Negroes are ‘active together’ and ‘interact’ to produce a meaning that is a resultant of that interaction.” <sup>2</sup> Black has worked with examples throughout, but towards the end he lists seven claims to which his suggested ‘interaction view’ is committed. His description is rich with verbs. Metaphor ‘selects’, ‘emphasizes’, ‘suppresses’ and ‘organizes’. Black’s achievement was to have legitimated literary insight for uses wherever an analytic philosophy might be employed<sup>3</sup>. His work is adverted to by writers in many fields, notably in descriptions of science, of varying degrees of ‘hardness’, and also elsewhere. A recent study has extended the interactive view of metaphor, ostensibly in natural science, in what appears to me to be an interesting way. Tauber, writing as a historian of science, has explicitly identified his

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1 Richards was developing Dr. Johnson’s definition (see footnote on page 67).

2 We might note the use of the mathematical term ‘resultant’, which might signify little if taken alone, but which here is accompanied other mathematical devices, e.g. functions, inverse functions and formulae such as  $f^{-1}(f(m))$ . Insofar as Black thought these to be in some way explanatory of his view of metaphor, we may suppose that, at the least, he thought some benefits would accrue from the juxtaposition, even if he did not suppose that he was slowly creating a further metaphor.

3 Black published a further account, *More about Metaphor*, in which he revised and clarified his earlier papers, in (Black, 1977). This, in turn, was subsequently revised and published in (Ortony, 1979 and 1993). Black died in 1988.

view of metaphor with that of Black, and has described the development of immunology with particular reference to the metaphor of 'self', noting the parallel use of the word in philosophy.

He writes:

Immunity not only defends the host/organism/individuality, but *defines* that entity. And it is in the context of establishing organismal individuality that the host becomes a self. Thus, self is a rich metaphorical construction for all those immune activities responsible both for elaborating immune process and more fundamentally for pinpointing the *origin* of that function. (Tauber 1997: 139)

For my immediate purposes, Tauber sees the possibility of, on the one hand, projecting immunology into a broader culture, offering the possibility of fresh insight into the social; and on the other hand, that the same metaphor may allow the social to infiltrate the science. What Tauber has to say of Davidson, of whom he is stoutly critical, separates us as to our views of metaphor, but my own preference for the linkage with pragmatism allows for the possibility of generosity to Tauber, in that he is used to a culture in which it is of the essence that the community of immunologists should come to agree precisely on how words are used, in order, at least, to be able to carry out that part of their work characterized by Kuhn as 'normal science'.

### **...and White**

White's use of Black's account is to question it, in particular, as to its extensibility to cover those cases of metaphor where several words, rather than one, are said to be used metaphorically. He asks about how we are supposed to identify *which* words are being used metaphorically, and if two or more words are so used what then would be regarded as the *focus*, or *foci*, of the sentence?

White remarks:

These apparently simple and natural questions admit of no easy answer. Not only does Black fail to address them; they cannot, in fact, be answered within his terms of reference. (White 1996: 11).<sup>1</sup>

Taking, and examining, a complex example from Shakespeare (Julius Caesar, III, ii, 176-180)

White concludes: "Black has not offered us any account of such (complex) metaphors at all, and my fundamental objection to him will not be that he gives a wrong theory of metaphor, but that, for a huge number of metaphors, he gives us no theory at all." (p. 16)

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1 Citations referenced only by page number in this section are to (White, 1996)



We may recognize, as White does not explicitly, that Black was concerned with the relation of metaphor to models, having in mind their uses in science and technology, and we may, therefore, overlook White's antagonism to Black on this board<sup>1</sup>. We may take it, instead, that White has not, at least at this stage, supposed that context is significant for meaning or that, in this case, he chooses to overlook it.

White offers some perceptions which I have not noticed explicitly elsewhere. An example is what he terms a 'bifurcated' construal, a term not far removed from Henle. He considers one of the sentences current in metaphor studies - it is used, notably, by Davidson, "Tolstoy was a great infant."<sup>2</sup> Of this sentence White says:

The word 'great' is, as it were, used twice over here, serving to specify *both* terms of the comparison involved in the metaphor. I shall say, in such a case, that the word has been '*bifurcated*', and describe the construal ... as '*bifurcated* construal'. (p. 22)

Before continuing, I invite a reader to return to the first sentence of this paragraph which, in my view, has no metaphorical component, and notice a similarity to that being described by White in his example. The sentence, one to which little objection might be made in the ordinary run of conversation, is ambiguous. The ambiguity turns around the work done by 'explicitly'. Does this word qualify 'noticed', indicating the immediacy of my awareness and understanding? Or does it qualify 'perceptions', indicating the explicitness of the statement by White and others of their perceptions? Or even, perhaps, serve to raise both possibilities in a convenient way? My own claim here, as the writer of that sentence, is that I am happy with the outcome of supporting both uses. However, I am unable to say that when I started to write that sentence that I wanted a reader to notice both options. I am able to say, that having completed the sentence, I immediately noticed what I will describe as a certain richness, albeit at the expense of singular clarity. I take this not to be trivial observation. It is a reminder to me, if one was needed, that language is not best described as a medium of communication between two persons. It is a reminder that, in speaking and writing, one creates or discovers what one thinks or believes and is, at the same

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- 1 Black is explicitly aware of the shortcoming to which White draws attention. Having given some examples of complex metaphors from Sir Thomas Browne and from W. H. Auden, remarks: "I shall have to neglect such complexities in this paper" (Black, 1962: 27).
  - 2 White has a simple method of multiple underlining which, combined with a distinction between Primary vocabulary (non-metaphorical word usage in the sentence) and Secondary vocabulary (metaphorical word usage) conveniently reveals that some words do both services in the same sentence.

time, a reminder that any attempts to discriminate these actions is ultimately futile. I am a language user and language uses me. I simply want to make the claim that ambiguity should not be regarded as in all cases a fault, *pace* Locke, and that it should not, therefore, be objected that metaphor should be resisted simply by virtue of ambiguity.<sup>1</sup>

Back to White who, having introduced the terms, Primary and Secondary vocabulary, and 'bifurcation', proceeds to exercise them in complex, literary, metaphors. White then introduces another figuration, not normally associated with metaphor. He begins with an example from *The Rape of the Lock* by Pope:

Here thou, great ANNA! whom three realms obey  
Dost sometime counsel take - and sometimes Tea.  
(Pope, A. Essay on Man Ep.ii, 1.1)<sup>2</sup>

White comments:

In *The Rape of the Lock*, metaphors are comparatively rare, and Pope makes the ironic use of zeugma, as in this example, perform many of the functions usually performed by using metaphor: by using the same verb simultaneously in two different senses and with two different objects, you establish an ironic comparison between those senses and objects ... There is nothing metaphorical about Pope's use of language here, but the effect is much the same as if he *had* used metaphor. (p. 27)

Later, White comments that,

The subtlety of Disraeli's *witticism* depends entirely upon the way it takes the notion of conscience as a guide and *plays* with it, the way in which it takes the simple literal understanding of that notion and uses metaphor to transform it so as to undermine Gladstone's moral posture. (p. 31) (*emphasis added*)

I emphasize here White's choice of vocabulary, which fits my enlarged view of Ted Cohen's view of metaphor and intimacy. The only reference I can find to Cohen's 'cultivation of intimacy', in White, is one sentence in an endnote:

It would, for example, be more appropriate in the case of the weather forecast cited above to discuss the significance of the use of metaphor in terms of what Ted Cohen calls 'the cultivation of intimacy' than by asking what insight the weather forecaster was seeking to engender.  
(p. 314, n. 47)

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- 1 Attempts by grammarians and others to legislate in order to disambiguate such constructions, seem on my view to have limited use, and in some ways are counterproductive.
  - 2 See, for example, (Pope, 1950: 53).

That this should be overlooked, especially in view of the power of his use of 'bifurcation' as a tool, as instanced, for example in his treatment of zeugma, seems surprising in spite of his claim primarily to have the cognitive significance of metaphor in mind. White also hides away in an endnote:

Consider Darwin's use of the phrase, 'Natural Selection'. This phrase is now so standard that we do not pause and consider the real metaphysical wit involved here. But the present chapter enables us to gain a theoretical understanding of the trick he pulls off: (The term may be construed as) 'a natural process that may be compared to Selection' (but which *qua* process is precisely *not* Selection), *or* (signifying) 'a process that may be compared to Nature Selecting. In the *Origin of Species*, Darwin is playing with the different interpretative possibilities generated by this ambiguity. (p. 263, n. 11)

an example of ambiguity intimately connected with creativity - I do not wish to specify any causal relationship - which might be said to be continuing to the present?

Later, White examines Wittgenstein on language, in particular the sentence:

"Language is a game with exact rules" which is acceptable taken as metaphor, not as a literal description of language. Seen as a metaphor, it is entirely apt, profitable, and inevitable in the course of our logical investigations. But we miss the subtlety of Wittgenstein's thought, if we rest content with summarizing it in the form, that this idea is acceptable as a metaphor not as a literal description. If we say that this is an acceptable metaphor, we can, in line with the theme of this chapter, mean at least two different things ... Language, whether or not it has exact rules, may appropriately be compared to a game that does have such rules. (or alternatively) Language with its exact rules, may appropriately be compared to a game with such rules. (p. 53-4)

The point is a useful one, as is revealed in White's immediate observation:

It is, for Wittgenstein, the first of these which gives us an appropriate metaphor for language, but he believes that we are tricked into thinking that *this* metaphor could only be true if the second were also. (p. 54)

White makes an interesting general point here to the effect that in any comparison of two objects, one will not possess all of the properties of the other, otherwise they would not be two different objects, but that the obverse of this is "that the comparison between A and B can clarify the nature of A. *precisely in virtue of properties of B which A does not possess*; in figurative comparisons, we bring out features of something by making a comparison with *something that does not possess those features*...(p. 54)

We have here, following Wittgenstein, a value for the notion of an ideal language, as something to which we may compare natural language, to which we compare logic and rational argument,

but have no grounds for supposing that natural language possesses any of these qualities. These comparisons have the effect of rendering all natural language metaphorical. Which seems a strange claim, but a claim which leads me to ask, as if in Down House, what would humans be like if their language were ever to be, or ever have been, literal? Paradoxically, it seems to me, if such a condition ever once obtained, *per impossibile*, those humans so endowed would not have survived. Is it out of the question that, in the long term, such an 'ideal' language would not have survival value? Not a good question if expecting an empirical answer, but perhaps offering an heuristic.

White has a linguistic theory of the working of metaphor which posits that, at root, a metaphor is a conflation of two hypothetical sentences, his method relies upon being able to construct the two hypothetical sentences.

This, then, is, it seems to me, the truth that lies behind the possibility of using the device of presenting a metaphor as the result of conflating two other sentences to exhibit the structure of a metaphor. The metaphorical sentence is a sentence constructed in such a way as to permit two different readings. A primary sentence corresponds to the one reading, a secondary to the other. By simultaneously presenting us with both, the metaphorical sentence leads us to see the situation described by the one reading as if it were the situation described by the other. (p. 116)

When elaborating the complex metaphors he uses as examples, White pays detailed attention to the context when constructing the related hypothetical sentences. He has, for example, a two-stage process to assist in the creation of the hypothetical sentences. He first replaces the terms belonging to the primary vocabulary with variables 'a,b,c, etc.' and then "We finally derive a secondary sentence by making appropriate substitutions for the variables". His terminology serves to conceal that it is to the context that he has turned for the 'appropriate' substitution. In common with my view, White writes frequently of 'as-if', and of metaphor offering an 'invitation', as for example in:

If, whatever else it does, a metaphor sets up a comparison, which the reader is invited to explore then the most obvious fact about that comparison is that the number of relevant respects in which two things can be compared is not fixed but is open-ended, and the reader can continue to see ever fresh points of comparison. (p. 174)

Insofar as White's interest is to address the questions posed by the most complex metaphors, we may suppose that the use of metaphor in conversation is not an immediate issue for him, and that when he speaks of context he is generally referring to the context within the poem or play he is considering.

White is alive to other forms of written literature. He includes the following, from Charles Darwin, in an endnote:

Are the feet of water-dogs at all more webbed than those of other dogs. - If nature had the picking she would make <them> such a variety far more easily than man, - though man's *practised judgment*, even without time can do much. - (yet one cross, and the permanence of his breed is destroyed) - (Notebooks, p. 414) (White 1996: 263, n.11)

White makes the point that if metaphors worked by means simply of words having a 'metaphorical sense' then this first example, of Nature 'picking', would have been necessarily limiting and might have denied the capacity of this metaphor to generate ideas that had not previously occurred to anyone at the time of Darwin's writing. He goes on to say that similar remarks could be made about 'a wide range of cases', and cites Wittgenstein's first use of "We play games with words".

White goes on to consider the case when a metaphor sets up a comparison between situations, and comments:

When we consider a comparison between two *situations*, then another more radical and far-reaching source of the open-endedness of the process of comparison emerges. A comparison between situations involves a correlation between elements in one situation and elements of the other. The metaphor then implicitly invites us to consider a whole range of comparisons: comparisons between elements of one situation and the elements which come to correspond to them through the correlation of the two situations. (p. 174)

We might ask of White, why he does not see a metaphor within a metaphor in such examples.

Likewise he also places a positive value on ambiguity and, relatedly, on the underdetermination of metaphor. White describes an interesting analogy:

We may, therefore, regard the metaphorical sentence as a 'Duck-Rabbit'; it is a sentence that may simultaneously be regarded as presenting two different situations; looked at one way, it describes the actual situation, and looked at the other way, an hypothetical situation with which that situation is being compared. The two ways of looking at the sentence arise by switching some of the words it contains from their normal, 'proper', use to use as dummy names: switch the words of the secondary vocabulary from their proper use to use as dummy names, and the sentence becomes a description of the actual situation... (p. 115)<sup>1</sup>

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1 I cannot help thinking here, that with some 4000 identified items in Bernard Dupriez's Dictionary of

This provides us with a suggestion which serves further to advance Cohen's 'cultivation of intimacy' view of metaphor, insofar as the physical response may be thought to enhance the intimacy.

## David Lodge

Whereas we have been linking metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony as 'the four master tropes' and thereby drawing attention to their commonalities, there are also reasons for looking at these differently. David Lodge begins part of his *The Modes of Modern Writing*:

The idea of a binary opposition between metaphor and metonymy can be traced back to Russian Formalism. Erlich observes that Zirmunskij 'posited metaphor and metonymy as the chief earmarks of the Romantic and classic styles respectively' in an essay of 1928. Roman Jakobson records that he 'ventured a few sketchy remarks on the metonymical turn in verbal art' in articles on realism (1927) and Pasternak (1935), and applied the idea to painting as early as 1919. (Lodge 1977: 73)

Lodge then moves to his main source, Jakobson's essay *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances* (Jakobson and Halle 1956), and begins by quoting:

We distinguish two basic types of aphasia - depending on whether the maker deficiency lies in selection or substitution, with relative stability of combination and contexture; or conversely, in combination and contexture, with relative retention of normal selection and substitution. (Jakobson and Halle 1956: 63)

Jakobson has made his 'cut' between selection and combination, a distinction drawn from Saussure, rather than, as had been usual, between giving and receiving a verbal message - Lodge sees this as "the advantage of a structuralist over an empirical approach" (Lodge 1977) (p. 77). Seen this way, it seems that aphasics who have difficulty on the selection axis of language are heavily dependent on context, that is, on contiguity.

The more his utterances are dependent on the context, the better he copes with his verbal task. He feels unable to utter a sentence which responds neither to the cue of his interlocutor nor to the actual situation. The sentence 'it rains' cannot be produced unless the utterer sees that it is actually raining. (Jakobson and Halle 1956: 64)

Even more striking, a patient when asked to repeat the word 'no', replied: 'No, I can't do it'. "Context enabled him to use the word that he could not consciously 'select' from an abstract paradigm" (Jakobson and Halle 1956: 78).

In the opposite type of aphasia:

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Literary Devices, (Dupriez 1991) that some strain is thereby put upon any notion of sustaining any important similarities between ideal and natural languages.

The patient confined to the substitution set (once contexture is deficient) deals with similarities, and his approximate identifications are of a metaphorical nature ... *Spyglass* for *microscope*, or *fire* for *gaslight* are typical examples of such quasi-metaphoric expressions. (Jakobson and Halle 1956: 72)

Jakobson linked the behaviour of the different types of aphasia with 'normal' discourse:

The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or their contiguity. The metaphorical way will be the more appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively. In aphasia one or other of these two processes is blocked ... In normal verbal behaviour both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other. (Lodge 1977: 79)

Jakobson went on to suggest that drama and film were metaphoric and metonymic respectively; and that in film, montage is metaphoric and 'close-up' is metonymic. He also suggested that in a Freudian interpretation of dreams, 'condensation and displacement' are metonymic, and 'identification and symbolism' should be understood as metaphoric. Lodge develops these, believing that the dichotomy is one which may be applied to data of differing generality and because it provides a theory of dominance of one quality over another, not one of mutually exclusive qualities (Lodge 1977: 80). Lodge remarks that he supposes that Hayden White "fails to appreciate this about dominance when he describes the metaphor-metonymy distinction as 'dualistic'" in his *Metahistory*. (White 1973: 33n). From my perspective, sympathetic to both views, I see the relationship differently. Lodge and White are both bending their theory of tropes to analytic uses. By contrast, my interest is different, I am trying to see tropes as sited in that field where action is being decided upon. Although we are habituated to asking what is the case in which this proposed action will take place, this habit is based upon a, now contested, Cartesian assumption. This might lead us to ask: How are tropes related and in what ways do they support each other? We will not be interested as to which view is right, neither as between Lodge and White, nor as between the Lodge-Jakobson and Vico-Burke-White perspectives. I am, however, curious as to how we might inspect the ways in which metaphor and metonymy might be related, and to what purposes, if any, we might put Lodge's extension of Jakobson. Lodge stated the case that however metonymical a text, the text remains metaphorical. For him, this is not an

important failure and he sails calmly on. For my view this is important. Whereas Lodge takes refuge in a taken-for-granted distinction between literature and non-literature:

How then can the metonymic be assimilated to the POETIC (i.e. the literary)?

The solution would seem to lie in a recognition that, at the highest level of generality that we can apply the metaphor/metonymy distinction, literature itself is metaphoric and non-literature metonymic. (Lodge 1977: 109)

trying to keep metaphor at the centre, not to say, trying to understand the issues in the writing of ethnographies, the literature/non-literature distinction is, for me, significantly blurred. Lodge, having made this distinction, puts it to his uses:

The literary text is always metaphoric in the sense that when we interpret it ... we make it into a total metaphor: the text is the vehicle, the world is the tenor. (Lodge 1977: 109)

I take it here that Lodge uses Richards' terms as Richards intended, and I do not wish to dispute with Lodge as to his application, I wish simply to extend it to include texts which I suppose he would not include in his category 'literature'. Or, such is the courteous, conversational, form of my disagreement with him. Incited to do battle, I would be inclined to deny the literature/non-literature distinction, but would probably retreat to a more pragmatist position. I return to this theme in the section on ethnography, below.

## Bakhtin

I enter this brief section on Bakhtin partly to pick up an earlier thread and partly as marker for something to come later. Bakhtin offers a challenge for anyone trying to present any kind of account of how language has been seen in the 20th century. A writer under the peculiar arrangements of Stalin's Soviet Union, who studied within a cultural island, one who occasionally published pseudonymously, Bakhtin has come to wider notice in the West only in recent years<sup>1</sup>. Using Bakhtin, I would like to develop some points previously only hinted at. I start from a somewhat distant point. C. Wright Mills in an paper read originally in 1940 wrote:

The postulate underlying modern study of language is the simple one that we must approach linguistic behavior, not by referring it to private states in individuals, but by observing its social function of coordinating diverse actions. Rather than expressing something which is prior and in the person, language is taken by other persons as an indicator of future actions. (Mills 1940: 904)

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1 I include this section on Bakhtin at this point mainly for reasons of tidiness. I arrived at Bakhtin much later than this point in my story would suggest. Much of what I want to draw from him would also be appropriate in a final chapter, a section on where one's interest might next turn.



This beginning is an arbitrary one, earlier formulations of the relation of language and gesture to the social situation rather than to inner states can be traced through G. H. Mead - acknowledged by Mills - and Cooley, to Germany - Mead had studied at Berlin, exposing him more directly to the influence of the historicism of Hegel and the psychology of gesture developed by Wundt. Mills' opening hints at, rather than expresses directly, a complex relation between situation and language development. Bakhtin, in *Discourse in the Novel*, holds this as central:

At any given moment a language is stratified not only into dialects in the strict sense of the word (i.e., dialects that are set off according to formal linguistic (especially phonetic) markers), but is stratified as well into languages that are socio-ideological: languages belonging to professions, to genres, languages peculiar to particular generations, etc. This stratification and diversity of speech will spread wider and penetrate to ever deeper levels so long as a language is alive and still in the process of becoming. (Bakhtin 1981) cited by (Holquist 1981: xix)

Bakhtin writes in anthropomorphic style of language in order describe the tension provided, as he puts it, "by the potential chaos of variety":

A unitary language is not something that is given (*dan*), but is in its very essence something that must be posited (*zadan*) at every moment in the life of a language it opposes the realities of heteroglossia but at the same time the (sophisticated) ideal (or primitive delusion) of a single, holistic language makes the actuality of its presence felt as a force resisting an absolute heteroglot state; it posits definite boundaries for limiting the potential chaos of variety, thus guaranteeing a more or less maximal mutual understanding. (Bakhtin 1981) cited by (Holquist 1981: xix)

Holquist, here Bakhtin's translator and editor, remarks:

The term Bakhtin uses here, "heteroglossia", is a master trope at the heart of all his other projects, one more fundamental than such other categories associated with his thought as "polyphony" or "carnivalization." (Holquist 1981: xix)

I wish to dissent from Holquist's remark about 'heteroglossia' being a more fundamental trope than 'carnivalization'. The two are, in my view, linked. The notion of 'carnivalization' derives from Bakhtin's doctoral thesis on Rabelais. In carnival, ambiguity and ambivalence rule. Licence outweighs convention. I play and dance to my own embarrassment. Unless I laugh, the carnival ends. Carnival is one boundary of Huizinga's world of play. My engagement with language, from time to time, is revealed as a form of carnival. From time to time I experiment with games and invite others<sup>1</sup>. Carnival was, and still is, that practical ground where we describe the boundary between what is acceptable and what is not, and then play either side of it. Nothing

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1 See the section on Mastermind on page 207.

Hill is an alternative to legislation.

## 2: Views from the social science side of the divide

Israel Scheffler combines a number of themes in one short passage:

But a special word needs to be said about the uses of metaphor in primarily investigative or theoretical spirit. Here what is often involved is the exploratory or heuristic function of comparison. The theorist frequently does not know in advance the basis of the comparison he puts forth. He supposes, or guesses, that certain general crossing of categories may turn out to be significant. The metaphor embodying this guess does not signify a prior determination by the theorist of the predicates importable from the investigative context in substantiation of his utterance. On the contrary, the utterance itself serves as an *invitation*, to himself and to others, to explore the context for significant shared predicates - new or old, simple or complex. ...The challenge is not to read a substantiated message but to find or invent a significant description of nature. (Scheffler 1979: 129)

Significantly for me, Scheffler moves from a kind of ignorance through exploration, or heuristics in hope, to *invitation*, to a form of play. I set this theme at the beginning of this second part of this chapter in which I review some items in the literature of the social sciences which have explicitly considered a metaphor, or some aspects of metaphor, as a kind of mark against which what follows may be compared. I begin with R. A. Nisbet's *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (1969) an exploration of the Western idea of 'development', then turn to Victor Turner's *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (1974). I follow this with shorter pieces on R. H. Brown's *A Poetic for Sociology* (1977), and D. N. McCloskey's *The Rhetoric of Economics* (1986). To this last I append a short consideration of a paper, *Should a Scientist Abstain from Metaphor?* contributed to a volume jointly edited by McCloskey, as a gesture towards an area, namely metaphor and natural science, which cannot be included more fully in this thesis. The section finishes with a consideration of aspects of Hans Joas' *Creativity of Action* (1996).

### Sociological theory

In *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (Nisbet 1969) Nisbet's concern is with the Western notion of development. He anchors his argument in Augustine, showing Augustine's appropriation of the Greek (then Roman) idea of growth and decay - a metaphor drawn from the life-cycle of plants and animals - and how this conflicted with the notion of cycles.

One of the earliest writings in sociology to concern itself explicitly with metaphor, written after Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962, 1970), but before the burgeoning of interest in metaphor that took place in the 1970s and '80s, the view of metaphor discussed was one readily understandable to likely readers. For Nisbet, metaphor is:

Much more than a simple grammatical construction or figure of speech. Metaphor is a way of knowing - one of the oldest, most deeply embedded, even indispensable ways of knowing in the history of human consciousness. It is, at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown. It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious, flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us. (p. 4) <sup>1</sup>

In the opening deployment, taken for the most part from literary criticism, he cites Herbert Read:

Metaphor is the synthesis of several complex units into one commanding image; it is the expression of a complex idea, not by analysis, nor by direct statement, but by a sudden perception of an objective relation. (Read 1952: 23)

He continues:

Language without metaphor is inconceivable. ... Metaphor is not only the consequence of experience, it is often the prerequisite. ... Metaphor can be, in short, not merely anterior to personal experience but the cause of it. (p. 4-5)

Aware of likely resistance, he faces it:

It is easy to dismiss metaphor as "unscientific" or "non-rational," a mere substitute for the hard analysis that rigorous thought requires. Metaphor, we say, belongs to poetry, to religion, and to the other more or less "enchanted" areas of thought. So it does. But metaphor also belongs to philosophy and even to science. It is clear from many studies of the cognitive process generally, and particularly of creative thought, that the act of thought in its more intense phases is often inseparable from metaphor - from that intuitive, iconic, encapsulating grasp of a new entity or process in the ways that Sir Herbert Read described above. (p. 5)

Alert to the significance of mathematics in 17th century, and earlier, thinking, Nisbet offers an analogy for the metaphor of growth:

One may liken the metaphor of growth to the axiom in a geometrical demonstration, which we may conceive for our purposes as strung out over some twenty-five hundred years. In the beginning was the axiom: society's likeness, its sameness indeed, to the organism and its cycle of growth. To the Greeks and Romans there was nothing metaphoric about the "axiom"; it was literal....(p. 9)

Presumably anxious to move on to the justification of his chosen metaphor, or analogy, Nisbet overlooks one of the corollaries of this analogy: that metaphor might work in the reverse

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1 Unless otherwise stated in this section, page numbers are to (Nisbet, 1969).

direction, and offer a new understanding of geometry. Nisbet concludes the introductory chapter:

It is, however, the argument of this book that the metaphor of growth and the analogy I have just cited are much more than adornments of thought and language. They are, as the following chapters will make quite evident, quite inseparable from some of the profoundest currents in Western thought on society and change. (p. 9)

Writing on Neil Smelser's *Social Change in the industrial Revolution*, Nisbet notes that it was subtitled *An Application of Theory to the British Cotton Industry*, he comments that "a better book on the *descriptive* aspects of social change connected with the cotton industry would be hard to imagine. Nor is the book without valuable analytical insights concerning both social structure and social change (p. 259)." Nisbet's aim here is to try to grasp what theoretical achievement Smelser has accomplished. Smelser is "concerned with the dimensions of *complexity* and *differentiation*, both of them central concepts in the classical theory of social evolution." His objection is expressed as:

Putting the matter differently, it is surely true that something akin to these processes may be found in both industry and family during the period indicated. The question is, however, what analytic function is served by their utilization; what light is thrown upon key processes of persistence and modification by their transfer from schemes of classical evolution to very finite and concrete subject matter? The answer is far from clear. (p. 262)

Later, including Marion Levy's writing<sup>1</sup> in his remarks, he writes:

The difficulty ... comes, however, from the effort to make concepts regarding change seem analytically useful within finite, concrete, and historical circumstances when these concepts are the products of developmental ways of thinking that were meticulously defined by their principal makers and users as non-finite, non-concrete, and, above all, non-historical. (p. 262)

I begin now to take the view that Nisbet has a restricted view of the work of metaphor. He seems here to be treating it as an additional route to the kind of knowledge which I take not to be available, he seems to have an interest in the processes of social change, so to speak, *in themselves*. His interest is in an analysis which will tell us more of what it is *really like*. His only reference to Nietzsche was to cite him as writer of a doomed Europe (p. 134). He is not disposed simply to be thankful that a better book for the description of the cotton industry in that period would be hard to imagine. He rightly challenges any claim that Smelser might be making, or implying, that functionalism is *the* theoretical stance to show what the world is *really like*, but he does so only on

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Levy (1949)

the authority of having pointed out the metaphorical basis of Smelser's theory, not on the basis that metaphor is at work behind all theory, and all that counts as knowledge. We should be wary, then, when moving on to Nisbet's next section which he entitles *The Irrelevance of Metaphor*. It seems to me that there is something significant lying behind Nisbet's writing here, though I think he misses it. He is surely right in his descriptions of our habit of construing large subject matters as single entities, and the place that metaphor has of providing the needful term. But this should surely be construed as so to speak, 'secondary metaphor', it has no immediate relation to action other than contemplation - the natural play to which Huizinga directs us. Second, by not taking into account the Romantic view, particularly deriving from Vico's view of the work of metaphor, and from Herder, with his notions of plurality, he does not notice that a hypostatized entity such as 'civilization' is not required. The notion of a plurality of cultures or societies does not call for a superordinate category, in Nisbet's examples 'civilization', for their description and explanation, or even to be able to 'grasp' them.

Nisbet then turns to Talcott Parsons and considers a possible irrelevance of metaphor.

We may now state the proposition in reverse. The less the cognitive distance, the less the relevance and utility of the metaphor. In other words, the more concrete, empirical, and behavioural our subject matter, the less the applicability to it of the theory of development and its several conceptual elements. (p. 267)

Nisbet's target is Functionalism and his strategy is to brand it as merely metaphorical, using one metaphor - that of distance - as a part of his rhetoric. That this metaphor should give rise to something which he can then describe as "illusory" seems not to worry him - he does not decry the metaphor as metaphor.

We are fond of referring to the great distances we have moved in our social theory since the heyday of evolutionism in the nineteenth century, but careful inspection suggests that these distances are largely illusory, and nowhere so evidently illusory as in our theory of change. (p. 269)

The conclusion of Nisbet's thesis is:

Generalization is beyond question what we seek from the empirical and concrete. But it is generalization from the empirical, the concrete, and the historical; not generalization achieved through their dismissal; not generalization drawn from metaphor and analogy. Whatever the demands of a social theory, the first demands to be served are those of the social reality we find alone in the historical record. All else is surely secondary. (p. 303-4)

Nisbet is surely over-impressed with the achievements of natural science. I am not among those who “beyond question” seek “generalization”. Enough on which to base some fresh habits for my routine existence will, in the first instance, suffice. Vico and Herder, drawing on their study of metaphor, persuade me not to apply the same criteria to both the physical and social. But this is not to denigrate the aspiration to a social science. Nisbet’s effort has been at the task of revealing or ‘demystifying’ some common lay and social scientific perceptions by making clear the underlying metaphor. An important task, but not one which fully values metaphor.

## Anthropology

I turn now to Turner’s *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (1974). Whereas Nisbet has a premise to the effect that everything stays the same unless something happens to make it change - his metaphor conscripts Newton’s principle of a body moving in a straight line continuing to do so until a force is applied to it, to do work as social theory<sup>1</sup> - Turner’s could scarcely be more of a contrast:

The social world is a world in becoming, not a world in being (except insofar as “being” is a description of the static. atemporal models men have in their heads), and for this reason studies of social structure as such are irrelevant. They are erroneous in basic premise because there is no such thing as “static action.” That is why I am chary of the terms “community” or “society,” too, though I do use them, for they are often thought of as static concepts. Such a view violates the actual flux and changefulness of the human social scene. (Turner 1974: 24)<sup>2</sup>

Having made this plain he immediately acknowledges Nisbet’s *Social Change and History*, and rehearses the associated commonplaces of the organic metaphor of development identified by Nisbet. He then begins to make distinctions and uses Stephen Pepper on ‘root metaphors’ (Pepper 1942). He quotes the same extended paragraph from Pepper as is used by Black (Black 1962: 239-40) and links Black’s comments on Pepper to his own professional history. Black’s gloss on this section of Pepper is that he “is talking about how metaphysical systems arise; but his remarks have wider application” (Black 1962: 240) and prefers not to speak of ‘metaphors’ at the level of generality as does Pepper. Black refers to them as “conceptual archetypes”, and by an archetype he means “a systematic repertoire of ideas by means of which a given thinker describes, by *analogical extension*, some domain to which those ideas do not immediately and

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1 What goes around, comes around. Leary reminds us that Newton drew upon the notion of mutual human attraction to explain the related motions of the planets, only for Bishop Berkeley later to use Newton’s notion of the attraction of the planets to account for mutual human attraction. (Leary, 1990: 13)

2 Page numbers in this section are to (Turner, 1974) unless given otherwise.

literally apply". Black then gives as an example in Lewin's 'field theory', first repeating Lewin's claim:

We have tried to avoid developing elaborate 'models'; instead we have tried to represent the dynamic relations between the psychological facts by mathematical constructs at a sufficient level of generality. (Lewin 1951: 21)

and then demonstrates that a metaphor - Black says 'archetype' - may be identified by reference to its previously displayed associated commonplaces, commenting:

Well, there may be no specific models envisaged; yet any reader of Lewin's papers must be impressed by the degree to which he employs a vocabulary indigenous to *physical* theory. We repeatedly encounter such words as "field," "vector," "phase-space," "tension," "force," "boundary," "fluidity" - visible symptoms of a massive archetype awaiting to be reconstructed by a sufficiently patient critic. (Black 1962: 241)

Back to Turner, who sets out to offer a somewhat more considered picture of metaphor:

I believe it would be an interesting exercise to study the key words and expressions of major conceptual archetypes or foundation metaphors, both in the periods in which they appeared in their full social and cultural settings and in their subsequent expansion and modification in changing fields of social relations. (p. 28)

Present participles, or gerunds, easily render English sentences ambiguous and it is not entirely clear what Turner is implying here, but the substantive suggestion is a key one for me. Within my own view, metaphor arises in a particular place and time, between particular individuals and, taking a Darwinian view, it survives because it accomplishes something useful. Or, more prosaically, something useful for someone, or some group, was accomplished in association with the metaphor. Turner continues:

I would expect these to appear in the work of exceptionally liminal thinkers - poets, writers, religious prophets, "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind" - just before outstanding limina of history, major crises of societal change, since such shamanistic figures are possessed by spirits of change before changes become visible in public arenas. (p. 28)

The ambiguity, or perhaps ambivalence, or both, continues; on the one hand Turner invokes Shelley's "unacknowledged legislators", but on the other, maintains a Humean separation between them and any later, wider shift. He supposes that:

The first formulations will be in multivocal symbols and metaphors - each susceptible of many meanings, but with the core meanings linked analogically to the basic human problems of the epoch which may be pictured in biological, or mechanistic, or some other terms - these multivocals will yield to the action of the thought technicians who clear intellectual jungles, and organized systems of univocal concepts and signs will replace them. (p. 28)

Turner's allusions grow wider, though I am by no means confident that I can spot them all. Orwell's thought technicians creating Quine's tropical jungle clearings<sup>1</sup>? Perhaps rich, compressed, metaphors are required at this stage to suggest ways in which Nietzsche's coins lose their faces: that is, to suggest ways in which metaphor is itself grasped - irony, should it be suspected of an untoward appearance here, will be addressed later.

Turner fearlessly adds metaphor upon metaphor, sometimes puzzlingly mixed:

We have to learn think of societies as continuously "flowing," as a "dangerous tide... that never stops or dies... And held one moment burns the hand," as W. H. Auden once put it. (p. 37)

He can mix this even further:

The formal, supposedly static, structures only become visible through this flow which energizes them, heats them to the point of visibility - to use yet another metaphor. (p. 37)

And can cap it with an apparent paradox:

Their very stasis is the effect of social dynamics. (p. 37)

Although this reminds me of some minutes watching a river in spate dividing its flow around the pillar of an arch, part of the bridge: there is a 'bow wave' on the upstream side, apparently stationary in spite of the flood stream. Perhaps there is no paradox when seen more closely? That said, it is difficult to see how much further away from Nisbet's premise he could get.

At this point, Turner introduces his notion of social dramas which he takes to be "units of aharmonic or disharmonic process, arising in conflict situations." The musical metaphor is passed without comment, to Nietzsche's amusement we may suppose. "Typically," says Turner, "they have four main phases of public action" - if the musical metaphor were not dead already, we might have expected 'four main movements' - "accessible to observation (p. 37-8)." This is not quite as straightforward as Turner implies. They are accessible to observation because Turner has chosen a conceptual scheme based upon theatre, which is premised upon observation. We come to see them as 'accessible to observation' only because our conceptual scheme divides up the actions in that way - we are only able to accept the continuous streams of sound as speech because we have learned to hear them that way - speech rendered on an oscilloscope appears

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1 Quine's image, in full, was given as: "Metaphor, or something like it, governs both the growth of language and our acquisition of it. What comes as a subsequent refinement is rather cognitive discourse itself, at its most dryly literal. The neatly worked inner stretches of science are an open space in the tropical jungle, created by clearing tropes away." (Quine, 1979: 160)



continuous. But let that pass, and note instead the four main phases, which comprise: first a *breach* of regular norm-governed social relations, followed by a mounting *crisis* leading to regressive *action*, followed by *reintegration*. These phases are well illustrated and instanced with references to Turner's previous publications. He then begins an interesting passage for my purposes:

Yet through all these changes, certain crucial norms and relationships - and other seemingly less crucial, even quite trivial and arbitrary will persist. The explanations for both constancy and change can, in my opinion, only be found by systematic analysis of *processual* units and temporal structures, by looking at phases as well as atemporal systems. For each phase has its specific properties, and each leaves its special stamp on the metaphors and models in the heads of the men involved with one another in the unending flow of social existence. (p. 43)

This last sentence is the first I am acquainted with which marks a move from the researcher's own use of metaphor for understanding and structuring research, towards an interest in the metaphors of those actors under study. But it is still, so far, a limited one. The metaphors are in the heads of the men studied and are formed by being stamped on. I can hear a criticism of my characterization here: that I am taking advantage of idiom to belittle Turner's text. Well, yes, I suppose I am. What he wrote may be read more generously. He can be read as saying that the metaphors are not left unaltered by the experience of the phases of the drama. A more generous reading still, one which inserted an understood "collection of metaphors and models in the heads of..." would allow for the possibility that old metaphors are replaced by new ones. But, if we allow that reading, then it seems odd that Turner is not interested enough in the processes of metaphor change at least to put up a marker to that effect here. So I conclude that, at this stage, metaphor is not seen by Turner as part of that dynamic which sustains the stasis. The emphasis is elsewhere:

I postulate that there will be certain important generic affinities between the speeches and languages of the crisis phase everywhere, of the redressive phase everywhere, of the restoration of peace phase everywhere. (p. 43)

That this evidence has not so far been forthcoming is accounted for:

Cross-cultural comparison has never applied itself to such a task because it has limited itself to atemporal forms and structures, to the products of man's social activity abstracted from the processes in which they arise, and, having arisen, which they channel to a varying extent. (p. 43)

Although for me this is a claim based more upon prejudice than evidence, my reading so far, suggests that Turner is right in this. That this is the case is said to be due to it being:

much easier to prop oneself on the “paradigmatic” crutch, coolly remote from the vexatious competitiveness of social life. (p. 43)

This (pejorative?) reference to Kuhn is of interest in that previous references to Kuhn have been positive. Earlier, Turner entered a *caveat* about root metaphor:

The danger is, of course, that the more persuasive the root metaphor or archetype, the more chance it has of becoming a self-certifying myth, sealed off from empirical disproof. It remains as a fascinating metaphysics. (p. 29)

The lexicon seems to have changed here. No one term jars greatly, but the combination of “persuasive”, “self-certifying”, “myth” and “fascinating metaphysics” together comprise, for me, an occasion something like the exercise of ‘reverse engineering’ carried out earlier by Black on Lewin, to which Turner has already paid compliment. How does a metaphor persuade? How does one estimate the extent of its persuasiveness? Let us give Turner the benefit of the doubt about ‘myth’, that he uses it in a non-pejorative sense. But ‘self-certifying’? Are all myths ‘self-certifying’? Are myths open to empirical disproof? Are they not rather replaced by preferred myths? Root metaphor seems to require rescuing from being ‘fascinating metaphysics’. How will we judge when a successful root metaphor gets over-persuasive? Keeping these questions in mind, consider Turner’s next sentence in which he sets up an opposition:

Here, root metaphor is opposed to what Thomas Kuhn has called “scientific paradigm,” which stimulates and legitimates empirical research, of which it is indeed the product as well as the producer (p. 29).

We may take it, I think, that the opposition which Turner wants to explore is concerned with the legitimization of empirical research offered by the “scientific paradigm”, but this doesn’t entirely remove the surprise at finding Turner opposing metaphor and paradigm as used by Kuhn. Margaret Masterman in an article concerned to clarify “*The Nature of a Paradigm*” as used by Kuhn, writes in her conclusion, having identified some 21 senses of the term ‘paradigm’:

In my view, the new ‘way of seeing’ produced by Black’s metaphoric ‘interaction’ is an alternative form of that produced by Kuhn’s gestalt-switch (Masterman 1970: 80).

‘Gestalt-switch’ is one of Masterman’s identifications of paradigm<sup>1</sup>.

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1 Masterman goes to some lengths to avoid the word ‘metaphor’. She includes “Man, that wolf” under the category of analogy. Her reference to Mary Hesse (Lakatos (1970: 83) is only to the section

So we may conclude that Turner approves Kuhn's 'paradigm' only conditionally - it can provide too easy a "crutch" (p. 43). He seems to be in some difficulty here. He has praised Kuhn based upon his (Turner's) own approval of I. A. Richards' interaction view of metaphor:

My own view of the structure of metaphor is similar to I. A. Richards' "interaction view"; that is, in metaphor "we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction" (Richards 1936:93). This view emphasizes the dynamics inherent in the metaphor, rather than limply comparing the two thoughts in it, or regarding one as "substituting" for the other. (p. 29)

which Black developed in ways which Turner seems to quote at length and with approval and then fastens upon the last of Black's points:

The metaphor selects, emphasizes, suppresses, and organizes features of the principle subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject. I have mentioned all this merely to point out that there are certain dangers inherent in regarding the social world as "a world in becoming," if by invoking the idea "becoming" one is unconsciously influenced by the ancient metaphor of organic growth. (p. 30)

The dangers Turner details. Taking his warning at face value, Turner's remedy would seem to be to find some way of checking for, or removing, the 'unconscious influence'. I, too, would have some difficulty in proposing a rule by which suspicious terms or phrases might be unambiguously identified. Seen from the point of view of keeping metaphor at the centre, Kuhn's construct, paradigm, can be interpreted as marking a point at which it became possible for scientists to overcome resistance to the term 'metaphor', but by providing a detour - itself offering evidence of continuing resistance to metaphor. Turner, although cautious about the long-distance influence of metaphor for as social science, is also open to its significance for his subject's understanding.

## Sociology

Brown, who in *A Poetic for Sociology* (Brown 1976) pays acknowledgments to Jack Douglas, Aaron Cicourel, Herbert Marcuse and Robert Levine, has an aspiration to provide a poetic for sociology which "could provide a common language for assessing all approaches." This is required because of some of the dominant 'crises' in the discipline. (Brown 1976: 10)<sup>1</sup>

What we know, says Brown, "is known through paradigms." (p. 77)

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on analogy which, for Hesse, is part of her consideration of metaphor. Masterman prefers to point to computer software which is designed to identify 'inexact matches' (Lakatos 1970: 79).

1 All subsequent references shown by page number alone, in this section are to (Brown, 1976).

In the broadest sense, metaphor is seeing something from the viewpoint of something else, which means, in terms of the arguments presented so far, that all knowledge is metaphoric. (p. 77)

He immediately continues:

If this is true, then the rich tradition of critical poetics suddenly becomes available as an epistemic resource. This vocabulary does not provide criteria for judging the accuracy of a representation to that which it presumes to represent. But it does offer criteria for judging what makes a good metaphor, and how metaphors may be most effectively used. (p. 77)

All this is much too fast. I am uncomfortable with the idea that metaphor is helpfully described as seeing A from the point of view of B, this is simply too wide for me. I need at least some possible relation of knowing, or seeing, by B that can apprehend or relate to A. Knowledge is only with difficulty, and almost never by way of clarification, attributed to non-conscious being, objects. And as for all knowledge being metaphoric, what is metaphorical about knowing that if I bark my shin on the leg of that table I am going to be in pain, except perhaps that I am seeing the possibility of such an event as modelled upon the last occasion, i.e. I am seeing the next as the last, which is not, to me, a very interesting case of metaphor.

But my quarrel with Brown is not over. He seems not to have noticed the reification of metaphor. He seems to assume that simply because he has a term, he must have some entity to which he may attribute qualities, and those of a general nature. Only so can he suppose that he may apply the related vocabularies of literary criticism to other worlds so unproblematically. Even within his own criteria he should see the 'carrying over' as also metaphorical, and therefore subject to the normal 'recognition of metaphor' processes, which he seems not to do.

Writing of his experience of applying his sociological training in a variety of programs of intentional social change, Brown writes: "What struck me most in this work was the dissonance between social theory as I had learned it and political reality as I was experiencing it. Social theory *was* relevant to practice as a rhetoric for legitimating political proposals as "scientific." It was used instrumentally despite its weakness as explanation or reflection." (p. ix)

In the hands of the conservatives the social systems models encouraged efforts to control society in the manner that experiments are controlled. When liberals were in charge their reluctance to exercise control ensured that programs simply failed. In either case the intention of helping people was vitiated by the manipulateness of the helping techniques: the increasing demand for experts to run larger and more complex organizations violated the increasing need for nonalienating forms of work and of governance. (p. ix)

Brown has his own version of Rorty's anti-essentialism:

A metaphor may help to crystallize this point: that of the five blind men feeling a elephant. By extension, one blind man, say the functionalist, feels the tusks; another, the statistical sociologist, feels the legs, and so on, each thinking that it is *he* who knows what the elephant "really" is like. A sighted person, coming on such a scene, might put together all the partial views to form a picture of the "true" elephant. In this essay we make no claim to have such sight. Ultimate, fundamental knowledge is as inaccessible to us as it is to the blind men (p. ix)

but he does not see the consequences of metaphor leading him to de-reify, so to speak, his notion of language. Brown's writing exhibits a breadth of knowledge of sociology, he has a critique of its divisions, and he offers an aesthetic route to joining our knowledge of the world and our knowledge of ourselves, his choice of metaphor and figurative language is largely a prudential one.

Brown proposes "that a cognitive aesthetic theory of metaphor be considered as an alternative logic of discovery." Notice here that Brown still speaks of discovery - apparently not noticing that discovery has a metaphorical implication. He does not consider - at least at this stage - the possibility that creation might be more apt. He has already acknowledged approvingly the contribution of Nietzsche, Coleridge and Groce as understanding metaphor as 'stretching' reality. This metaphor of 'stretching' is probably best seen as a fudge by Brown. It offers an elision between the competing metaphors of 'discovery' and 'creation' without making this explicit. Brown's aspiration to provide a poetic for sociology which "could provide a common language for assessing all approaches" (p. 10), even if construed as an aesthetic undertaking, seems an impossible goal.

## Economics 1: Deidre McCloskey

McCloskey has sustained an interest in the rhetoric employed in economics at least since the mid '80s, most significantly, for me, in *The Rhetoric of Economics* (McCloskey 1986), also in (Klamer and McCloskey 1988) and (McCloskey 1990).

The service that literature can do for economics is to offer literary criticism as a model for self-understanding. Literary criticism does not merely pass judgements of good or bad; in its more recent forms the question seems hardly to arise. Chiefly it is concerned with making readers see how poets and novelists accomplish their results. (xix) <sup>1</sup>

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1 All page numbers in this section are to McCloskey (1986) unless otherwise given.

With this sentence we move at once closer to Rorty, to Geertz (Geertz 1973), and to Clifford and Marcus (Clifford and Marcus 1986). The focus is turned upon writing as a significant component in social science. One of the chief merits of literary criticism is that it functions as a kind of conversation, albeit at a distance. At some level critics are read by writers and those who contribute criticism are themselves writers. Rorty consciously appropriates this feature of literary criticism in his use of Bloom, a feature which, I believe, is absent from McCloskey.

McCloskey startles with one of her early considerations of metaphor:

Among the least bizarre of (Gary Becker's) many metaphors, for instance, is that children are durable goods, like refrigerators. ... A beginning at literal translation would say, "A child is costly to acquire initially, lasts for a long time, gives flows of pleasure during that time, is expensive to maintain and repair, has an imperfect second-hand market: likewise, a durable good, such as a refrigerator:" That the list of similarities could be extended further and further, gradually revealing the differences as well - "children, like durable goods, are not objects of affection and concern"; "children, like durable goods do not have their own opinions" ... The literal translation of an important metaphor is never finished. In this respect and in others an important metaphor in economics has the quality admired in a successful scientific theory, a capacity to astonish us with implications once unseen" (p. 76ff)

We should notice McCloskey's use here of 'translation' rather than either of its two other immediate possibilities, 'meaning' or 'interpretation'. By her choice of term McCloskey keeps, helpfully, within a vocabulary of language<sup>1</sup>. She also finds a positive rhetoric for metaphor as an alternative to Nisbet and Turner: "an important metaphor in economics has the quality admired in a successful scientific theory, a capacity to astonish us with implications once unseen"(p. 77). The comparison offered between metaphor and theory also points up a difference between them, that writers are keen to advertise theory, whereas metaphor seems often to remain concealed, perhaps a mole, or even a mule smuggling dangerous substances.

McCloskey takes the game onto the opponent's turf:

The critical question is whether the opposite trick, modifying human behaviour with mathematics is also metaphorical. (...) But mathematical theorizing in economics is metaphorical, and literary. Consider, for example, a relatively simple case, the theory of production functions. Its vocabulary is intrinsically metaphorical. "Aggregate capital" involves an analogy of "capital" (itself analogical) with something - sand, bricks... that can be "added" in a meaningful way; so does "aggregate labour," with the additional peculiarity that the thing added is no thing, but hours of conscientious attentiveness; the very idea of a "production function" involves the

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1 Since the publication of *Crossing*, McCloskey (1999) the former Donald McCloskey became known as Deidre. My decision to apply the female pronoun throughout is based simply on McCloskey's insistence that her new name should appear as the author in re-publications and editions of works initially published when she was a man.

astonishing analogy of the subject (the fabrication of things, about which it is appropriate to think in terms of ingenuity, discipline and planning) with the modifier (a mathematical function, about which it is appropriate to think in terms of height, shape, and single-valuedness). The metaphorical content of these ideas was alive to its nineteenth-century inventors. It is largely dead to its twentieth-century users, but deadness does not eliminate the metaphorical element. (p. 79)

This last sentence poses a tension with many writers on metaphor, at least from Nietzsche onwards, who suppose that 'forgetting' is enough to render a metaphor literal, and make it available for conceptual use. McCloskey seems here to be suggesting that there remains something in these mathematical usages which continues to have metaphorical effects. From my perspective, the issue has to do with the de-contextualizing brought about by the mathematical generalization.

McCloskey's next points are perhaps directly translatable to the social scientists' seminars:

Allegory is merely long-winded metaphor, and all such figures are analogies. Analogies can be arrayed in terms of explicitness, with simile ("as if") the most explicit and symbol ("the demand curve") the least explicit; and they can be arrayed by extent, from analogy to allegory. Economists, especially theorists, frequently spin "parables" or tell "stories." The word 'story' has in fact come to have a technical meaning in mathematical economics, though usually spoken in seminars rather than written in papers. It means an extended example of the economic reasoning underlying the mathematics, often a simplified version of the situation in the real world that the mathematics is meant to characterize. It is an allegory, shading into extended symbolism. The literary theories of narrative could make economists self-conscious about what use the story serves. Here the story is the modifier, the mathematics the subject. (p. 78-9)

Let us pass over the relationships which McCloskey proposes for the figures she introduces here and notice instead the combination of figure and narrative which she develops.<sup>1</sup> Whilst clearly more of an apologist for figuration, McCloskey is no metaphor millenarian:

One thing is clear: the absorption of rhetorical thinking in economics will not precipitate any revolution in the substance of economics. Rhetoric does not claim to provide a new methodology, and therefore does not provide formulas for scientific advance. It does not believe that science advances by formula. It believes that science advances by healthy conversation, not adherence to a methodology. (p. 175)

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1 Although a discussion of modern economic writing is perhaps not its most natural home, the connection of figuration and narrative brings to mind proposals from MacIntyre which, while not made explicit in *After Virtue* (1985) have been subsequently commented upon. MacIntyre is to be read as a valuer of Vico, historicism and narrative [MacIntyre, 1985 #152] as his postscript to the second edition suggests (p. 265-8). He has also subsequently remarked: "Vico reminds us of what the Enlightenment had forgotten, that rational inquiry, whether about morality or about anything else, continues the work of, and remains rooted in, prerational myth and metaphor. Such inquiry does not begin from Cartesian first principles, but from some contingent historical starting point, some occasion that astonishes sufficiently to raise questions, to elicit rival answers and, hence, to lead on to contending argument." (MacIntyre, 1994: 147)

Even if I respond positively to McCloskey's position so described, I cannot entirely forget that her writing is framed by the observation, as she reminds us, that economics has always been better at describing past events than at predicting future outcomes.

## Economics 2: Cristina Bicchieri

In her paper *Should a scientist abstain from metaphor?* incorporated into a volume edited jointly by McCloskey and Klamer (Klamer and McCloskey 1988) Bicchieri shapes to support a thorough-going view of metaphor in science:

Indeed, I want to argue that metaphors play an essential role even in mature fields, in the development of new theories as well as the extension of old ones. They are *constitutive* of scientific discourse, [Bicchieri 1988: 104]

I interrupt only to cheer.

This does not happen because, in rejecting the distinction between literal and metaphorical, one has to come to the conclusion that all language is metaphorical. Quite to the contrary, it is possible to appeal to a different theory of meaning and reference, a theory that makes metaphors an essential part of the linguistic machinery of theories. [Bicchieri 1988: 104-5]

I here omit a (non-problematized) reference to Max Black and an example of appearing not to be acquainted with the difference between him and Davidson. Bicchieri then considers whether a two-meaning explanation of metaphor may be understood to be at work in science:

Can one say the same of scientific language? In this context it is even more difficult to see how there could be two separate meanings, while it is often the case that a statement that was previously used in a figurative sense later becomes literal: it gets "entrenched" into the language of the theory. Consider an economic expression like "The market is in equilibrium." Nowadays it is obviously taken to be literal; it means that excess demand is zero, something that can in principle be verified. The same expression, two hundred years ago, was taken to be figurative; it evoked an unspecified gravitational process of prices toward their "natural" values. The example is not meant to suggest that an expression counts as literal only when it becomes amenable to some sort of operational definition, testing, or other empirical procedure. There are many other economic sentences, such as "agents' preference sets are convex" or "Oligopoly is an  $n$ -person noncooperative game," which are meant to be literal, yet have no obvious empirical counterpart. What makes them literal, I want to suggest, is their being well entrenched into economic theory. [Bicchieri 1988:105]

I interrupt again to point to some difficulties here for Bicchieri. She writes "Nowadays it is obviously taken to be literal; it means that excess demand is zero, something that can in principle be verified." The difficulty here seems to me to be that Bicchieri supposes that she has some ground to touch, something which avoids any metaphorical/rhetorical content, some known



datum from which to take bearings. I cannot suppose what this might be, other than some aspect of experience of her own, or perhaps of a trusted other. If an aspect of experience, then it is an experience under a description. How described?

I have to concede that her next points, as to examples of economic sentences having no obvious empirical counterpart, seem unexceptionable.

Bicchieri, then borrows "the more precise notion of 'generative entrenchment'" from Wimsatt in biology,

in which early evolutionary features have a higher probability of being required for features that will appear later and will have a large number of "downstream" features depending on them. A feature is thus "generatively entrenched" in proportion to the number of features that depend upon it. [Bicchieri 1988:105]

I do not readily see why Bicchieri supposes that so metaphor-drenched an explanation, and thus circular, helps her position. Would it not be simpler to say that as the metaphorical descriptions continue to be reinforced by successful action, that the related vocabulary moves progressively along the continuum she has already described from the metaphorical towards the literal?

Later, she writes:

The fictional character of such models is well captured by the idea of metaphorical description, attributing a provisional similarity to structures otherwise very different. The metaphorical process reveals new relationships, suggests new ways of looking at the phenomena. Some of them may later come to be rejected, These are the unsuccessful models, the failed metaphors. They can fail precisely because they have cognitive content and are not simply metaphorical devices. [Bicchieri 1988: 110]

I take this to exemplify much writing about metaphor, where metaphor is apparently being supported but is still being resisted and, in consequence, some confusion results. To speak of "metaphorical description, attributing a provisional similarity" is to suggest that the metaphor is the initiator. This might be helpful if the matter is seen from the hearer/receiver's position, but misleading if from the speaker/author's. I would prefer to regard the matter more socially, and to speak of an invitation to act 'as-if', if only 'for the sake of argument'. To say that "the metaphorical process ... suggests new ways of looking at.." serves to reify/hypostatize metaphor and places a gap, however small, between "the metaphorical process" and "ways of looking at". These two are more closely linked than that. What we call a metaphorical process is a "way of looking at". I can still hear Davidson muttering about 'dormitive power'.

"Some (metaphors) may later come to be rejected", writes Bicchieri. (Bicchieri 1988: 110) I doubt that metaphors are rejected, I imagine, rather, that it is the case that another metaphor is preferred, which quickly returns me to the link with pragmatism.

Bicchieri attempts, perhaps not wisely or usefully, to combine two issues. In addressing the question of whether or not metaphors refer, she uses as her example what those of us outside the formal study of economics sometimes refer to, perhaps disparagingly, as *homo economicus*. "Let's take the idea of modelling agents as having rational expectations" (Bicchieri 1988: 110). She continues:

The question is not whether an extension of the principle of rationality to people's beliefs is realistic or has to be taken in a literal sense, but whether it is fruitful in generating new information about macroeconomic phenomena, in coordinating previously uncoordinated aspects of the field, in suggesting refinements of previous theories. What happens is that rationality is provisionally assigned to people's beliefs, and the consequences of this assignment are explored. This is the way scientific metaphors work. Theory-constitutive metaphors are invitations to future research, in that they introduce terminology for features of the world that seem probable, but whose properties have yet to be discovered. (Bicchieri 1988: 110-1)

Bicchieri does not set out the potential analogy, otherwise concealed here. Presumably we may consider metonymy as a candidate for suggesting what properties might yet be discovered.

Bicchieri has earlier alluded, approvingly, to Mary Hesse's deployment of pragmatism:

That the literal/figurative opposition is only pragmatic has already been suggested by Mary Hesse (1976), who conceives of literal usage as use in a familiar context. Indeed, if the literal and the figurative are but the two extremes of a continuum, the distinction one wishes to draw is a matter of degree: It has to do with the level of entrenchment of a sentence into our cognitive structure. (Bicchieri 1988: 106)

What is concealed in this description is the normal development of a metaphor in the ongoing science, that is the experiment or demonstration. In other words, metaphors become established by virtue of the 'success' of the experiments or demonstrations. Bicchieri's description slides around this.

What remains to be explained is why some metaphors meet with success, how some of them succeed in becoming so well entrenched as to grow into literal statements. (Bicchieri 1988: 106)

As she, rightly in my view, suggests: "Becoming literal is not just a matter of time" (Bicchieri 1988: 106). Becoming literal has more to do with successful use.

## Hans Joas: *The Creativity of Action*

Perhaps the main thread in my consideration of metaphor in social thought, so far, has been that of alleging that its position has been at best a very marginal one when considered as an explicit component of theorizing. Few writers have pressed an explicit case on behalf of metaphor, and some of those writers have been considered. I now wish to turn to a contemporary writer who, on the one hand has clear uses for metaphor for some purposes and on the other, what appears at first consideration, to be an inexplicable blindness to metaphor elsewhere. I will attempt to describe and explore some aspects of this strangeness in the hope of arriving at some hypotheses about metaphor and contemporary social thought.

As I began this present project, so Hans Joas' *Die Kreativität des Handelns* (1992) was published in English. A chapter on theories of action within sociology, in which Joas describes and discusses a range of authors including Parsons, Weber, Durkheim, Tönnies and Simmel, is followed by a chapter which he entitles *Metaphors of Creativity*. Joas describes the aim of this chapter as:

...to proffer a typology that characterizes the most important forms in which the idea of creativity has surfaced and become influential. (Joas 1996: 70)

He begins his justification for choosing metaphor as his main category:

The terms used in such contexts were seldom introduced with clear and precise definitions; for the most part, the writers were tentatively groping for a theoretical articulation of phenomena known to them from personal experience. Their formulations consequently were not phrased in terms of the emotionless objectivity of pure thought, but frequently remained metaphorical and circumscriptive, and often conveyed a mood of enthusiasm. (Joas 1996: 70)

I interrupt here to make two comments. First, simply to emphasize what I take to be Joas' positive comment as to the link between metaphor and a mood of enthusiasm, we may suppose that we are, perhaps, being reminded of the 'catching-on', and of the 'intimacy-generation' of metaphor to which Cohen has directed attention. Second, to remark that the conjunction between the metaphorical and the circumscriptive *could* be misleading in that there seems to me to be no warrant for implying that because metaphorical, therefore circumscriptive, rather the reverse in that metaphor has the function of extending rather than circumscribing. Joas continues:

It is for this reason that I refer not to concepts or models of creativity, but to *metaphors*. When attempting to understand metaphors we have to apply skills different from those used in dealing with scientific concepts in the strict sense. We at least have to be willing to accept the tentatively circumscribed phenomenon as something which can actually be experienced. (Joas 1996: 70)

From the perspective of trying to keep metaphor at the centre, I welcome the explicit choice to remain with metaphor during the historical description, though I have caveats as to other features of this section. Joas seems to remain within a view of metaphors as having meanings which may, or may not, be understood: he seems not to be familiar with Davidson's contribution - Davidson does not appear in the Names Index. This in turn makes speaking of skills in relation to metaphor somewhat problematic, particularly if Davidson's notion of nudging is to be preferred. We might observe at this point that Joas seems to imply that, whereas the theorists he describes may justifiably be thought of as putting forward their theory as if "tentatively groping for a theoretical articulation of phenomena known to them from personal experience", by contrast he seems to suppose that creative action of actors generally, does not share in the same "tentative groping", i.e. is somehow other than characterisable as metaphoric. Joas goes on to produce his typology which, in the first place, turns around the metaphors of expression, production and revolution. He elaborates:

I am referring here to the idea of expression in the work of Johann Gottfried Herder, and the ideas of production and revolution in Karl Marx's writings. ... each of them represents an attempt to anchor human creativity in at least one of the three ways of relating to the world. The idea of *expression* circumscribes creativity primarily in relation to the subjective world of the actor. The idea of *production* relates creativity to the objective world, the world of material objects that are the conditions and means of action. And finally, the idea of *revolution* assumes that there is a potential of human creativity relative to the social world, namely that we can fundamentally reorganize the social institutions that govern human coexistence. (Joas 1996: 70)

Once having elaborated these metaphors in some detail, Joas sees all three as having one deficiency in common. To describe this he borrows the term "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" from Parsons, with which he intends to point out that they all attempt to grasp the creativity of action by attributing creative features to a certain concrete type of action. An inevitable consequence of this approach, says Joas, is:

that other concrete types of action are denied all vestiges of creativity and perceived as the very opposite of creativity. (Joas 1996: 116)

For Joas this is, if not a fatal consideration, is certainly a serious one:

those persons who are unable to express themselves in poetic form appear as dull, narrow-minded philistines whose forms of expression do not merit further attention; that persons who do not find self-fulfilment in the handling and processing of objects must be alienated; and that persons who do not actively contribute to paving the way for a revolution can be nothing more than a part of a homogenous universe of repression. (Joas 1996: 116)

Joas comes to an interim conclusion at this point which he expresses as:

The concretist tendency to equate a particular type of action with the term 'creativity' thus leads to the depreciation of other types of action and encourages the extension of the concrete typological concept to metaphorical uses that lie beyond the proper limits of its applicability. (Joas 1996: 116)

I have a number of difficulties with this sentence. On the one hand, I am very sympathetic to what I take to be its main substantive point: that the "misplaced concreteness" has the consequence of applying a pejorative description to those other forms of action to which the epithet 'creative' has not been attributed. This point is close to the centre of Joas' argument and I am persuaded by him. However, the second part of the sentence troubles me somewhat. I can describe this, firstly by objecting to the conjunction 'and', suggesting that the second part of the sentence should be regarded as of equivalent status to the first, and secondly, by drawing attention to the opposition of "metaphorical uses" to "proper limits". The rhetorical effect of placing all this into one sentence is that metaphor gets to be found guilty by association, and the association is merely a contingent one. It might be said that I am already making too much of this, and I would be inclined to admit to a certain pedantry if it were not that the structure of Joas' argument has included the setting up of a major division between his description of the past theorizing as examples of (dominant?) metaphors, against which he will counterpose his own (very welcome) redescription of the creativity of action as theory. In effect, he is here counterposing 'metaphor' to 'theory', whether or not this is, for him, explicit. Whether or not this is intentional on Joas' part is not a simple matter for me to decide and, strictly, I have no need to do so. However, I have found no explicit statements decrying metaphor, such explicit statements as there are seem, on the contrary, to be positive: as supporting a "mood of enthusiasm" (Joas 1996: 70) and as aids in "tentatively groping for a theoretical articulation of phenomena." So, perhaps we may say that, for Joas, the relation between 'metaphor' and 'theory' is not unambiguously that of child to adult, nor that of route and destination, but perhaps rather that of 'lay' actor's use and of social scientist's use? If so, then we may think of Joas as, to that extent, being in the tradition of Hobbes and Locke. Such a description of Joas' explicit use of metaphor is

not appropriate without further qualification, but rather than pursue this line further at this stage, I prefer to consider what Joas offers as the substantive kernel of his view of the creativity of action.

### **The Fundamentals of a Theory of the Creativity of Action**

My rhetorical aim in this section is to describe what I take, at this stage, to be a significant overlapping of criteria shared between Joas' perception of the creativity of action and my view of keeping metaphor at the centre.

Joas makes his task clear at the beginning of the next chapter:

My intention is therefore to provide not a mere extension to, but instead a fundamental restructuring of the principles underlying mainstream action theory. It is not that common typologies of action are simply incomplete; rather, I am calling into question the very principle on which these typologies are based. (Joas 1996: 145)

Joas lists three reasons "why one should not follow those economic, sociological, psychological and analytical-philosophical theories of action which take 'rational action' as their starting point." (p. 146) His first reason is that "the very concept of *action* isolates the individual action from its context". He elaborates this point as having a two-fold significance. The term 'context' draws attention to the fact that: "every action takes place in a certain situation", and "secondly, presupposes an actor who performs not only this one action" (Joas 1996: 146). This starting point: "may thus itself already involve a theoretically problematical extraction of action from its situational and biographical contexts" (Joas 1996: 146). One of the advantages for actors used to metaphor, as described in these pages, is that metaphor is rooted both in situation and biography.

Joas then turns to the *unintended* effects of taking rational action as the starting point. He uses the same form of argument as previously, and rightly, in my view:

All theories of action which proceed from this point automatically create a non-rational counterpart. In doing so they create an evaluative framework into which they force the multiplicity of action phenomena. (Joas 1996: 146)

Joas makes the point that this objection would hold whether the rationality were the narrow one of the maximization of efficiency or whether it were the much wider Kantian one in which it: "follows then that emotions and spontaneity are excluded from rationality, and an amoral

orientation towards self-interest can then itself be judged irrational.” (p. 146) <sup>1</sup> Joas adds Habermas to his list of targets, upon whom he comments that:

It is therefore possible to find the concept of communicative rationality convincing as a theory of rationality and yet resist accepting the way in which Habermas proceeds to develop a theory of action out of the same train of thought as gave birth to his theory of rationality (Joas 1996: 146).

Asking what alternative there might be to his target procedures, Joas nods to the ability of microsociological studies of action in particular contexts to produce a “wealth of empirical data”. However, he denies their ability to provide an alternative theory of action. Whilst they might “quite correctly admonish the purely conceptual work done by, for example, Parsons ...for being bereft of any empirically verifiable characteristics of real human action”, Joas says that:

However, in the process they risk losing touch completely with the topic of rationality.  
(Joas 1996: 147)

Joas’ solution is to propose what he terms “the *reconstructive introduction* of the concept of rational action”. Courtesy to Joas suggests that we should record his explanation of this term:

By reconstructive introduction I mean here the process of shedding light on the tacit assumptions behind ideas of rational action. All theories of action which proceed from a type of rational action - irrespective of whether they are based on a narrower or broader, a utilitarian or a normative concept of rationality - make at least three assumptions. They presuppose firstly that the actor is capable of purposive action, secondly that he has control over his own body, and thirdly that he is autonomous vis-à-vis his fellow human beings and environment. (Joas 1996: 147)

Having so introduced his main categories with which he entitles this chapter, *Situation-Corporeality - Sociality*, Joas uses an approach similar to that in his previous chapter, by pointing out the pejorative entailments of failing. For example, as to the condition of purposive action, Joas writes:

According to this view, if the actor shows a low degree of concentration on purposive action, a loss, or low level, of body control, a loss or an abdication of autonomy as an individual, then he will appear less rational or indeed non-rational and there will be less likelihood of his actions being classified as rational. (Joas 1996: 147)

Joas touches on my own ‘political’ interest in his comment describing an implication:

The proponents of such conceptions are well aware that the preconditions assumed by the model of rational action are frequently not to be found in empirically observed action. However, these writers are forced to claim that the limited degree to which these preconditions obtain is not a deficiency of their particular theory but a fault of the actors themselves. (Joas 1996: 147)

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1 See (Kövecses, 1990) for an extended discussion of metaphor in relation to emotion.

As to the question of an actor's competence in relation to maturation, Joas comments:

From the perspective of advocates of rational models of action in the broad sense, childhood development is merely the process of acquiring the capacity for rational action. Such theorists discount the possibility that a study of this developmental process can teach us anything about the structure of action and the capacity for action itself. (Joas 1996: 147)

So, Joas sets out the conditions which he hopes to meet in his notion of the creativity of action. Watching him do this brings to mind many points along the road travelled in my attempt to keep metaphor at the centre. Bower's description of the neonates acting in what looks to be a rational strategy for gaining and maintaining control over their environment, is a description of pre-linguistic abilities, which cannot be adequately redescribed within S-R vocabulary. Quine's remarks as to metaphor and the acquisition of language (Quine 1979: 159-60) when considered together with Bower's observations offers something very close to what Joas seeks, from an area which he supposes will not offer it.

Joas completes his exploration of the relevant metaphors, by next considering *Lebensphilosophie* in Europe and pragmatism in the United States.

The key ideas or metaphors which these two intellectual currents bring to bear on the problem of creativity are, on the one hand, the concepts of 'life' and 'will' and, on the other, the concepts of (creative) 'intelligence' and of 'reconstruction'. (Joas 1996: 116)

Following a discussion of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Simmel, together with an occasional contrasting glance to William James, Joas concludes in respect of the *Lebensphilosophie* that although the metaphor of life contained therein, does support the idea that creative acts "have their roots in a pre-reflective realm", nevertheless:

To apply this metaphor in the form in which it was used by the philosophy of life would, however, merely be to counterpose a metaphysics of creativity devoid of any action-theoretical foundations to classical sociology's conception of action, which is so barren when it comes to a notion of creativity. (Joas 1996: 126)

I am again persuaded by Joas here, since holding metaphor at the centre, is to resist the emergence and rise of metaphysics (see below, p. 131).

Finally, in his chapter on metaphors of creativity, Joas turns to the pragmatists, where he identifies the key terms which, he declares, are often misunderstood if not seen in relation to the pragmatist notion of action. These include, problem and problem solving, the ideas of intelligence and reconstruction, the concepts of abduction and the constitution of meaning. He



then records, briefly, the five main objections, as he sees that have been raised against the pragmatist notion of action. These he describes as (a) the *momentary* nature of consciousness, (b) that there is a tendency to anchor the achievements of consciousness in action to early cognitive development, (c) that pragmatism has no room for the actor to define the problems, that the problems are thought of as ready-made, leaving the actor simply to search for the predetermined possibilities, (d) the issue of the extent to which the pragmatist position is overly individualistic, and lastly (e) that pragmatism presents all action as *instrumentalized*, leaving no room for non-purposive action in art and play. Joas' response, broadly conceived, is to concede that historically that there were moments when such criticisms had purchase, but that these were subsequently used as points of departure within pragmatism. Joas' development of his theme uses Peirce, James, Dewey and Mead and deploys, in illustration, W. I. Thomas' study *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Thomas and Znaniecki 1926) as a contemporary example of pragmatism as the ground of a piece of sociology. Drawing on Dewey, Joas comments that "anchoring creativity in action allows the pragmatists to conceive of creativity precisely as the liberation of the capacity for new actions." This is a view to which I am sympathetic, in that I understand metaphor to work at the conjunction of language and experience, understood as including action.

Joas makes an intermediate claim at this point:

(P)ragmatism is, put succinctly, a *theory of situated creativity*. It deserves a place in a history of the idea of creativity just as much as in a history of action theory, for it is a theory of the creativity of human action. (Joas 1996: 133)

From the array of argument and examples which Joas presents in support of this claim, I wish only to draw attention to one small point - the use by C. S. Peirce of the term 'abduction'. In Peirce's words, from his *Collected Papers*:

Abduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea; for induction does nothing but determine a value, and deduction merely evolves the necessary consequences of a pure hypothesis. (Cited in (Joas 1996: 134))

I take it that this form of words is a description of the use of metaphor, spoken from within the vocabulary of logic.

It is important to Joas that his description of the creativity of action be non-teleological. One of

the advantages of conscious use of metaphor, as it seems to me, is that the recognition of any metaphoricity offers the possibility not only of resisting a move into metaphysics but, for similar reasons, offers the possibility of resisting a teleological account of related action. And this not simply in the sense that teleological interpretations imply that cognition is separated from action. Here, as I see it, the connections between pragmatism and my emerging account of metaphor are close. Joas puts it, elsewhere, as :

In (the pragmatist's) view the actors confront problems whether they want to or not; the solution to these problems, however, is clearly not prescribed beforehand by reality, but calls for creativity and brings something objectively new into the world. (Joas 1993: 4)

This seems very close to my understanding of metaphor.

### **3: Views from Philosophy**

In this section I start by considering a chapter by David Wood in his *Philosophy at the Limit* (Wood 1990), where he considers how recent discussion of metaphor might be challenging philosophy. I follow this with a brief consideration of an hypothesis relating metaphysics and metaphor. I then introduce a short section on Donald Davidson.

#### **David Wood**

David Wood starts by noting that, in the 20th century, philosophy is said to have taken a 'linguistic turn', which he says is 'not a single-stranded phenomenon' (Wood 1990: 26). He then identifies 'a few smaller movements within the larger turn worth tracing out'. These included, first what Derrida called the *logocentric* view of language associated with the early Wittgenstein, early Husserl, Frege and Carnap. The second, reflecting the shift in Wittgenstein's own writing, that of ordinary language philosophy linked to Austin, Grice and Searle. Wood then groups semiology, structuralism, hermeneutics and post-structuralism (Saussure, Barthes, Derrida and Ricoeur) as those "possibilities of relatively autonomous development opened up by literature, poetry and indeed texts in general". Wood identifies three factors precipitating a reassessment of metaphor in philosophy. The demise of the logocentric view of language, a breakdown of

procedures for deciding on the metaphorical /literal claims and the translation of Heidegger's later writings and those of Derrida, "each of which resist an interpretation within the familiar literal/metaphorical opposition." (Wood 1990: 27)<sup>1</sup>

Considering, first, the demise of the logocentric view of language, Wood writes:

And with the disappearance of the belief that language pictures the world or directly represents it, the merely *derivative* status of metaphor is threatened. It is no longer at all obvious that metaphorical claims are to be treated either as literally false, or, more charitably, as disguised forms of literal utterance, into which they should be translated. (Wood 1990: 27)

and concludes that, with the demise of the logocentric view, "metaphor becomes problematic" (Wood 1990: 27). His conclusion is, of course, the opposite of that of this thesis. Holding metaphor at the centre, it is philosophy, at least in various forms of metaphysics, that is rendered problematic. It is not clear to me what Wood intends by the 'merely *derivative* status' of metaphor. I understand that, for the most part, though not exclusively, metaphor uses terms that are previously established and may thereby be described as derivative, but since this applies to almost all statements, I have to assume that Wood intends something more. My problem would not have arisen had Wood offered a more modest conclusion. Given Wood's descriptions to this point, such a conclusion might be, 'Metaphor, construed as derivative, becomes problematic.' With this I have no immediate problem - it simply reminds us that metaphor is a somewhat portmanteau (cornucopian?) term - within a view of metaphor as central, 'derivative' is peripheral. Wood seems unaware of Davidson.

Wood's second factor he describes as an extension of Ryle's notion of 'category mistakes' within 'language games'. "Put briefly, category instability in transition from one frame of reference to another threatens the distinction between the metaphorical and the literal." (Wood 1990: 27) and adds parenthetically, "A version of this thesis is to be found in Rorty's book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.)".

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1 As an illustration, Alan Bass the translator of *White Mythology* has a note on one of Derrida's section headings *La métaphysique – relève de la métaphore*. He writes: "This subtitle is untranslatable, at the very least because of its double meaning. Derrida simultaneously uses *relève* as both noun and verb here. If *relève* is taken as a noun, the subtitle would read: "Metaphysics – the *relève*, the *Aufhebung* of metaphor." If *relève* is taken as a verb, which would be the usual reading, it can be understood in its usual sense, i.e. not as a translation of *Aufhebung*. Thus the subtitle would read: "Metaphysics derives from, takes off from, metaphor." Not only are the two possible translations very different, rendering the relationship between metaphor and metaphysics very problematic but, insofar as '*Aufhebung*' is one of Hegel's key terms in his dialectic then Derrida's relationship to Hegel is similarly problematic.

After having identified, somewhat chauvinistically, the translations of Derrida and Heidegger's later writings as his third factor, Wood then slightly, and significantly for my purposes, shifts his interest. Hereafter his central concern "will not be with the nature of metaphor, nor the theory of metaphor, but with the role played by metaphor (and our concepts of metaphor) in the understanding and practice of philosophy." (Wood 1990: 28) Wood then proceeds to the possibility of the elimination of metaphor.

### **The Purity Thesis**

Wood identifies ontological, epistemological and 'discursive' forms of the thesis that philosophy "can and must dispense with metaphor to realize its goal of rational clarity (p. 28)" The goal of rational clarity is open to questions regarding both terms, but it would be interesting to know whether Wood includes for the possibility that philosophers might be content to be clear about the vagueness or ambiguity of descriptions, necessary or otherwise.

Typically the purity thesis, says Wood, "combines two claims: the *desirability* for philosophy of having clean tools, a language that reflects reality and employs clearly defined concepts; and the *possibility* of eliminating the figurative from rational discourse (Wood 1990: 30)".

The ontological form of the thesis is exemplified by reference back to Ryle's 'category mistakes'. Metaphor, it is said, "feeds on and exploits just such categorial confusion; it brings together beings that should be kept apart" (p. 28). This accusation has purchase only in the short term. Metaphor has a role in the re-organization of categories, a process which is still under way even in the natural sciences, a process which may be expected to continue. So short-term an objection should not be allowed to pass without signalling some qualification.

The epistemological form is instanced in Locke: "(words) interpose themselves so much between our understandings and the truth which it would contemplate and apprehend that, like the *medium* through which visible objects pass, their obscurity and disorder does not seldom cast a mist before our eyes and impose upon our understandings" (Locke 1894: Bk.3, Ch.9). What is central to knowledge, says Wood, is the clarity and distinctness of our ideas and "Metaphor only endangers this clarity."<sup>1</sup>

The discursive form combines a range of possibilities, including Susan Stebbing's view that "an

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1 Quine would put a different view, putting a value on ambiguity (Quine, 1960: 127).

argument derived from a metaphor will be a bad one" (Stebbing 1939: 113). Wood makes no objection to this. A more open version would be: 'an argument derived from a metaphor will be a metaphorical one'. Stebbing's view would have a place within a philosophy concerned to remedy the shortcomings of natural science. Wood remarks that, "For metaphors work on similarity, but in some sense everything is similar to everything else (Wood 1990: 29)." For a philosophy concerned with clarity, this is unusually vague. What is intended by "metaphors work on similarity"? It would be better to say that metaphors identify or perhaps, more strongly, create a similarity not previously noticed. This last should not be read as making two things similar, rather 'create a similarity' suggests that the ways in which two things are alike is a construction 'in the mind' of the observer.

### **The Return of Metaphor**

Wood asks whether the purification of language is a possibility and comments that "a resounding negative answer would announce the *return of metaphor*. He then takes Nietzsche's account in *Truth and Falsity* and Polyphilos' extension of Nietzsche in Anatole France's *Garden of Epicurus*.

Treating the Nietzsche essay, Wood remarks that it is best known through one oft-quoted paragraph and "I will not miss the opportunity to quote it again":

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. (Nietzsche 1979: 84)

Wood introduces the paragraph with the comment "it comes after an account of the intellect as the creator of useful illusions" (Wood 1990: 30) and, following two paragraphs in which he reconstructs Nietzsche's argument, or rather reconstructs that psychological thread starting from sensations, and then comments on the generalization which he takes Nietzsche to be making.

There are some *non-sequiturs* in Wood's commentary here. He writes:

But Nietzsche is clearly not just talking about truth, but about philosophy as a whole, as the 'purveyor of truth', the guardian of reason. (Wood 1990: 31)

We might ask: Isn't Wood in danger of taking Nietzsche's ironies over-literally here? Another criticism of Wood's elucidation of Nietzsche here would be that he does not read this section of Nietzsche's essay in context, as was attempted above. (See page 62ff.)

For his criticism of 'truths' as 'worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses' is a claim one can make about the ideality of all philosophical concepts, that they are dead metaphors. (Wood 1990: 31)

Wood seems to reluctant to accept the consequences of this possibility and, by ignoring them, may be thought to be 'assuming the consequent', i.e., that since philosophy is hereby left without its usual tools and at the same time without its *sine qua non* - that of providing the clarity which reason requires, therefore Nietzsche's claim may be ignored. In something of a contrast, Wood is happy to concede another generalization:

The other way in which Nietzsche is clearly generalizing is in the phrase 'A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms'. What this rightly suggests is that in philosophy the claim of truth is underpinned by a whole system of concepts and values, not just the single concept of truth in the abstract. (Wood 1990: 31)

Wood goes on to support this with a series of examples:

Consider, for example, the idea of purity, as in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*; or rigour, in Husserl's *Philosophy as a rigorous science*; or clarity (to describe style), the language of vision and light (insight, enlightenment, 'seeing' what is meant...), the language of grasping, apprehending, comprehension, and so on. (Wood 1990: 31)

But this, Wood observes, may be extended to the role of extended metaphor, models and analogies in structuring philosophical texts:

One thinks immediately of the foundational model (i.e... in Descartes and Kant), the pervasiveness of spatial models in such notions as 'conceptual geography', 'logical space', and the spatial rhetoric of structuralist thought - of limits, discontinuities, thresholds and so on. (Wood 1990: 31)

In offering this list, Wood is beginning to compile a possible programme, but his next step disappoints me:

Nietzsche's claim can be followed up without passing any particular judgement on the argument that generated it. We can come to take an interest in the figurative structures of philosophical texts and wonder whether these might not be doing a lot more of the work than we had previously suspected. (Wood 1990: 31)

This seems both very reasonable and very pragmatic. Why do I not endorse it wholly - do I not approve of this proposal? Yes, I do approve, we all ought to ask whether the figurative structures

of texts might not be doing a lot more of the work than we had previously suspected - this is the normal practice of any literary critic, or even the interested reader of novels or poetry - and, we might hope, all readers of the products of the social sciences. My disappointment is in the reluctance to consider the argument that generated Nietzsche's aphorism. The decision not to consider it, one no doubt decided upon in part because of the subsequent developments in psychology, also allows Nietzsche's account of the evolutionary biology and its relation to metaphor, i.e., the interactive model of the social context of metaphor and the drive to truth, to drop completely out of sight! How does Wood think of Philosophy?

Would that Wood would elaborate more on his next remark:

With Nietzsche we get something like the possibility of a psychoanalysis of texts...  
(Wood 1990: 31)

but, instead, he moves immediately to Anatole France and his conclusion to an experiment in deconstruction:

By an odd fate, the very metaphysicians who think to escape the world of appearance are constrained to live perpetually in allegory. A sorry lot of poets, they dim the colours of the ancient fables, and are themselves but the authors of fables. They produce white mythology.<sup>1</sup>  
(France 1923: 194-5)

There follows a short section on Heidegger. Wood says of Heidegger's later writing that it is 'packed' (elsewhere, "riddled" (Wood 1990: 28)) with metaphor, and then continues:

Heidegger's position is focused in the claim that 'the metaphorical exists only within the boundaries of metaphysics'. (p. 34) ...But one's first reaction to Heidegger's later writing is that it is packed with metaphor....In his *Letter on Humanism* he remarks that 'language is the House of Being'. This he says is not to be taken metaphorically. ... Moreover,...Heidegger tells us that when he says of seeing and hearing that they are ways of thinking, it is not, again meant metaphorically. And yet it is equally clearly not meant literally. What he is claiming is that the very distinction between metaphorical and literal is one that makes sense only within a metaphysical framework. (Wood 1990: 34)<sup>2 3</sup>

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- 1 It is this last phrase which will Derrida use to entitle his first substantial essay on metaphor (Derrida 1982). His use of France begins at p. 210.
  - 2 Paul Ricoeur comments on this: "In Heidegger himself the context considerably limits the import of this attack on metaphor, so that one may come to the conclusion that the constant use Heidegger makes of metaphor is finally more important than what he says in passing against metaphor." (Ricoeur 1978: 280) Ricoeur's critique of Heidegger's remark is in the following pages.
  - 3 Hannah Arendt, student and friend of Heidegger writes: "The categories and ideas of human reason have their ultimate source in the human senses, and all conceptual or metaphysical language is actually and strictly metaphorical." (Arendt 1963: 532)

I am not sufficient of a philosopher to be clear about the move, that “the distinction between the metaphorical and the literal only makes sense within a metaphysical framework.” Wood continues:

For Heidegger, the judgement that the remark about seeing, hearing and thinking is metaphorical would rest on the assignment of seeing and hearing to the sensory level and thinking to the intelligible or non-sensory. A remark that conjoined these two levels could only be metaphysical. (Wood 1990: 35)

By now, I am becoming rather suspicious. What is going on here? “A remark that conjoined these two levels could only be metaphysical.” Maybe we might decide that it should be thought to be metaphysical, but it is also surely metaphorical, even Aristotle would be clear about that. This is beginning to look like Wood and Heidegger trying, between them, to insert a programmatic definition.

Heidegger attributes the sensory/non-sensory distinction to metaphysics, and concludes that ‘the metaphorical exists only within the boundaries of the metaphysical’ (Wood 1990: 35).

In the words of a current idiom “Well, that’s alright then!” But from where I sit, it is not alright. It seems to me that we have experience enough to challenge the distinction between sensory and non-sensory in relation to seeing and hearing on the one hand, and ‘the intelligible’ on the other. My earlier study on *Perception as a model of Learning* gave me cause to suppose that an acceptable account of human seeing would not be made without the inclusion of language or perhaps, with a nod to Quine, “or something like it”. Human seeing is surely not eliminable from the realm of ‘the intelligible’ in the required sense of that term.

Before leaving this problematizing of metaphor as ‘natural’, two more comments. The first another remark from Nietzsche :

The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself. (Nietzsche 1968: 88)

I have not checked whether the notion of a ‘drive’ was already established as a psycho/biological term, I believe it was, but in any case I think we may take this sentence as a clear indication of Nietzsche making a Darwinian remark. This seems enough to cause us to believe that Nietzsche himself might have thought of metaphor as a ‘natural’ category. However I do realise that I am on slippery ground here. So with an aside, ‘back to the firm ground’, we might notice, with



Wood, that when Wittgenstein argues that there are no pure sounds 'that we hear motorbikes not 'sounds' (he) is attacking not just the distinction between the sensory and the non-sensory, but metaphysics itself' (Wood 1990: 35).

## Metaphysics and Metaphor

*The philosophical tradition downgraded metaphor because recognizing metaphor as third source of truth would have endangered the conception of philosophy as a process culminating in vision, theoria, contemplation of what is vorhanden. (Rorty 1991(a): 12)*

I begin this short section by acknowledging that I have something akin to an, as yet ill-formed, hypothesis. This is to the effect that metaphysics has usurped the place properly occupied by a description of the work of metaphor<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps more enticingly expressed as: *The proper study of metaphysics is the work of metaphor* - deliciously ambiguous, of course, and I would not be entirely unhappy if it brought to mind the second line of Pope's couplet:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,  
The proper study of mankind is man. (*An Essay on Man, Ep. II, 1.1*)

More condensed, my hypothesis might read as: Metaphysics is the work of metaphor. In this form it remains just as ambiguous.

In what follows, I try to offer a redescription of a small part of Heidegger's writing and, in so doing, try to expand the metaphors of breadth, rather than depth, as a way of side-stepping the accusation of using 'phallogocentric' images. The writing of Heidegger which I have chosen is his inaugural lecture, as professor, at Freiburg translated as *What is Metaphysics*, from which I shall only occasionally stray. The lecture was given some three years after the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, but has been seen, by some, as a link between that and much of his later writing (e.g. Krell, 1993: 90-1).

There are at least two stipulative definitions<sup>2</sup> under which Heidegger writes. I take one from another paper, *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*:

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1 See footnote on the translation of *rèleve* in *White Mythology* on page 125 above.

2 I follow Israel Scheffler on definitions here. See Chapter 1 *passim*. (Scheffler 1960)

Philosophy is metaphysics. Metaphysics thinks beings as a whole - the world, man, God - with respect to Being, with respect to the belonging together of beings in Being. (Heidegger 1978: 432) <sup>1</sup>

Heidegger, perhaps under the influence of Husserl, to whom he had dedicated his earlier *Sein und Zeit*, 'brackets' issues of 'knowing' as part of metaphysics, and chooses instead to write of moods, which is proper in his use of the term metaphysics. In particular, he chooses to write of "the fundamental mood of anxiety". He makes what I take to be the normal distinction between anxiety and fear, in short, that anxiety is an object-less fear, whereas the anxiety of which Heidegger wishes to speak does "not mean the quite common anxiousness, ultimately reducible to fearfulness... Anxiety is basically different from fear. We become afraid in the face of this or that particular thing that threatens us in this or that particular respect" (Heidegger 1978: 100). His 'meditation' on anxiety is revealing from my perspective. Consider some of his remarks:

In anxiety, we say, "one feels ill at ease"... We can get no hold on things... Anxiety reveals the nothing. We "hover" in anxiety. Anxiety robs us of speech. (Heidegger: *What is Metaphysics?* in Heidegger 1978: 101)

In ordinary everyday understanding, what Heidegger is describing is an inability to find an appropriate vocabulary to describe a set of circumstances. Or, seen through my hypothesis, a failure not only of a lexicon, but a failure of facility with metaphor. We can tie this in with Nietzsche's fable. Unable to use language, I am reduced in my means to overcome the '*bellum omni contra omnes*', unable to engage the other with metaphor, I am further reduced. Anxious, I might be, and with the possibility of fear on the horizon.

I read Derrida, never having heard him speak, and fancy that I hear him speaking. His subject seems to be the business of reminding me of the limitations of language while, at the same time, he is also about the business of reminding me of the unavoidability of metaphor. Generally, his area of interest is the literary, rather than the social. Derrida, in Rorty's description, is Heidegger's most astute reader, and we, in turn, should perhaps read Derrida against Heidegger. For a beginning, I like David Wood's description of Heidegger on language:

Heidegger wants to generalize his criticism of the concept of metaphor to its application to language as a whole, because he thinks - and here I am glossing over many problems - that an authentic relationship to language is one in which language is never an object, never subjected

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1 Remarks like this make me wonder whether Heidegger knew of Nietzsche's *Truth and Lie*.

to a disciplined ordering of predicates and their proper application, but is rather a gift that opens a world to us, and to which there is in a sense no outside. (Wood 1990: 36)

My version of Heidegger's view, so stated, has been arrived at in part by seeing that the common-sense view of Language has involved reification<sup>1</sup>. Reification, I have understood, against the usage of many, as a figure with a strong resemblance to metaphor, which we have forgotten was metaphor. In this, I find some support from Blackburn who, writing of the charge of reification, says:

The charge is itself not entirely transparent, and the fault these philosophies commit may more hopefully be put as treating things of one type as if they were things of another. *Reification* (Blackburn 1994)

... which is identifiable as one of Aristotle's descriptions of metaphor. In addition to understanding language, as it is normally understood, as being an instance of reification, I have preferred to think instead of a picture of man as normally much more active, much more capable than has been widely the case in much social science. We are language, we need more verbs and fewer nouns. We speak, we write, we converse, we argue.

I read Heidegger as if he regards metaphor as a term in the lexicon of Language. Unlikely as it may seem, my attempt to hold metaphor at the centre, is closer to the idea that Language is rather in the lexicon of metaphor. Reconstructed in Wood's terms, Heidegger's gift is not Language, not even language, but is metaphor, from which we have derived what we commonly call Language. As I understand this, it is, in certain respects, a reversal of Heidegger's view.

And however else we may also choose to understand him, Derrida is also Heidegger's Demonstrator. If we understand Derrida as radicalizing Saussure, by a description of language as a complex interaction of differences and also dismissing as metaphysical, distinctions between phonology and semantics, between words and meanings, then, for Derrida, metaphor is subject to the same limitations and is to be understood as at home in a complex play of differences.

I do not follow Heidegger and Derrida in understanding metaphor as a metaphysical concept, my view is strongly opposed to this. If we suppose that metaphysics is a term which esteems an openness to whatever there might be beyond the reach of our knowledge-producing procedures,

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1 In the remainder of this section, I shall need a convenient way to distinguish two versions of the word language. In the one case, it will be the generic term distinguishing speech and writing from, say, vision; this I will capitalise as Language. The other term, the non-reified idea, I will write in lower case, language.

then metaphor is pre-eminently the device which serves that need. As I expressed it earlier: metaphysics has usurped the place properly occupied by a description of the work of metaphor. Derrida is almost wholly concerned to elaborate texts in an attempt to demonstrate a different kind of writing, an activity which he cannot easily separate from reading. I take this to be Derrida's way of paying respect to conversation, of which the distinguishing mark is the interplay of speaking and listening. Writing, unless one takes steps to avoid it, is monological. Even when a writing is the writing of a dialogue, it does not manage entirely to discard its fundamental monological structure.<sup>1</sup>

## Donald Davidson

I came to Davidson after Richards, Black, and Mary Hesse (Richards 1936) (Black 1962; Black 1993) (Hesse 1972).<sup>2</sup> My immediate reaction was to see Davidson as a writer who was both very much at ease with the work of metaphor, and who was adopting a deliberately obtuse description of it for his own private, even Bloomian purposes<sup>3</sup>. In other words, I was dismissive of it. The paper could be said to have Black as one of its targets - or Black might well be justified in having thought that such was the case, and he wrote an 'afterthought' entitled *How Metaphors Work: A Reply to Donald Davidson*, which was published together with the conference papers (Sacks 1979). However, my first impression of Davidson's paper was undermined, to some extent, by what I perceived as some weakness in Black's 'afterthoughts', and this was perhaps the beginning of my change of view.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Bakhtin offers remarks on the distinction, in literature, between the monological and the dialogical. See below pp 98ff.

2 Davidson's primary account of metaphor was first delivered at a conference on metaphor at Chicago, proceedings of which were contained in Sacks (1978) pp. 29-45, but first published in *Critical Inquiry*, 5 (1978), 31-47, and is also reprinted in (Davidson, 1984: 245-64).

3 See Harold Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, (Bloom, 1997) *passim*.

4 Black began his *Afterthought*: "To be able to produce and understand metaphorical statements is nothing much to boast about: these familiar skills which children seem to acquire as they learn to talk, are perhaps no more remarkable than our ability to tell and to understand jokes." (Black, 1978: 181) Here, it seems to me that Black has it back to front, and I take Quine to have given the better account of language learning. Black then gives a number assertions which he takes to be true about Davidson's opening remark "Metaphor is the dreamwork of language". Assertion no. 2.2 says: "In making the remark he was saying something, not merely doing something else such as nudging his reader to find similarities between metaphors and dreamwork." I think this reveals the differences between Black and Davidson quite well. Black specifically acknowledges the differences over this particular assertion: "I intend 'saying' here to mean much the same as J. L. Austin's 'constating' i.e., the presenting of claims that might be disputed (...). We shall see that Davidson emphatically disagrees with 2.2." (p. 182)

It was with this 2.2 that I began to see the differences and to begin to prefer Davidson's view as the one which offered the widest set of subsequent uses. This was written in 1978 and was some years before

“Metaphor is the dreamwork of language” (Davidson 1984: 245). It is difficult for me to imagine a stronger opening than these words from Davidson. Though they will stand alone for most readers without further elaboration, Davidson adds a selection from the associated commonplaces of dream:

...and, like all dreamwork, its interpretation reflects as much on the interpreter as on the originator. (Davidson 1984: 245) <sup>1</sup>

I am not fully aware of the processes by which I came to be converted to Davidson’s view, except that upon a second reading, that is after having been somewhat disappointed in Black’s reply, I recognized that Davidson had here performed the task which I had set myself from the beginning, that is to keep metaphor at the centre. Once the conversion had happened, much then fell into place. A few examples might help to illustrate this.

...understanding a metaphor is as much a creative endeavour as making a metaphor, and as little guided by rules. (p. 245)

This reaches back to my motivations for this study, celebrates the abilities of the many, and avoids, or at least blurs, the distinction between intellectuals and others - an issue which I will take up again in the section on Richard Rorty.

These remarks do not, except in matters of degree, distinguish metaphor from more routine linguistic transactions: all communication by speech assumes the interplay of inventive construction and inventive construal. (p. 245)

Davidson is proceeding with a very careful use of vocabulary. He uses the phrase ‘linguistic transactions’ instead of language; his choice precludes any necessity to consider whether rules apply to the description of language - his ‘transactions’ offers an alternative. ‘Inventive construction and inventive construal’ sharply contrast with the normal transmission model of communication - what Rorty will redescribe, approvingly, as ‘language as not a medium’ CIS (p. 10ff). Whether consciously or not, all conversation and discourse has a significant component of discovering the other’s history and their associations with particular families of noises and marks.

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Davidson’s further work began to underpin his view on metaphor. Davidson’s view would, I think, have been that Black did not understand that all language was of the ‘nudging’ variety, all language invites the other to construct for themselves, rather than receive a parcel.

<sup>1</sup> Page numbers for *What Metaphors Mean* are given as in (Davidson, 1984)

What metaphor adds to the ordinary is an achievement that uses no semantic resources beyond the resources on which the ordinary depends. (p. 245)

Metaphor is considered ordinary, it is not portrayed as 'deviant' - and keeping metaphor at the centre does not permit a 'deviant' attribution. In case we had missed the implication about the avoided rules and language, Davidson takes us around again:

There are no instructions for devising metaphors ; there is no manual for determining what a metaphor 'means' or 'says'; there is no test for metaphor that does not call for taste. (p. 245)

In one short sentence he has nodded approvingly to Aristotle, Quine and Nietzsche. If we still have not grasped the point, he adds the following footnote:

I think Max Black is wrong when he says, 'The rules of our language determine that some expressions must count as metaphors.' ('Metaphor', 29.) There are no such rules. (p. 245 n.1)

It suits my purposes well to accept Davidson's denial about the acceptance of rules, he knows perfectly well that such rules have often been proposed, for this redirects our gaze to the skills of those speak, converse, write and read, redirects us away from a reified 'language'. In case I have been unclear, perhaps I should say that I find all of the above points compatible with the view of metaphor which I am trying elaborate.

Davidson states his thesis straightforwardly:

This paper is concerned with what metaphors mean, and its thesis is that metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more. (p. 245)

Acknowledging immediately that his thesis "flies in the face of contemporary views with which I am familiar, much of what I have to say is critical" (p. 245), he nevertheless makes a strong positive claim:

But I think the picture of metaphor that emerges when error and confusion are cleared away makes metaphor a more, not a less, interesting phenomenon. (p. 245-6)

and, having done so, quickly identifies his targets:

The central mistake against which I shall be inveighing is the idea that a metaphor has, in addition to its literal sense or meaning, another sense or meaning. This idea is common to many who have written about metaphor: it is found in the works of literary critics like Richards, Empson, and Winters; philosophers from Aristotle to Max Black; psychologists from Freud and earlier to Skinner and later; and linguists from Plato to Uriel Weinreich and George Lakoff. (p. 246)

In case a reader might wonder that by addressing such significant targets, he might also be targeting metaphor itself, he establishes his positive appreciation by adverting to its uses:

Metaphor is a legitimate device not only in literature but in science, philosophy, and the law; it is effective in praise and abuse, prayer and promotion, description and prescription. (p. 246)

and then attends to the tension which this combination has set up:

For the most part I don't disagree with Max Black, Paul Henle, Nelson Goodman, Monroe Beardsley, and the rest in their accounts of what metaphor accomplishes, except that I think it accomplishes more and that what is additional is different in kind. (p. 246-7)

Davidson then returns immediately to describe his view:

My disagreement is with the explanation of how metaphor works its wonders. To anticipate: I depend on the distinction between what words mean and what they are used to do. I think metaphor belongs exclusively to the domain of use. (p. 247) <sup>1</sup>

We may notice that whereas earlier, Davidson's vocabulary has linked him positively to Aristotle, to Quine and to Nietzsche, here he may be read as allying himself with Austin's *How to do things with Words*, <sup>2</sup> and more generally with Wittgenstein, though neither, I believe, wrote explicitly about metaphor.

Davidson has adopted a spiral structure as part of his rhetoric - although some premises are by now in place, argument has otherwise not been visible to date - and now he returns to re-state his view:

It is no help in explaining how words work in metaphor to posit metaphorical or figurative meanings, or special kinds of poetic or metaphorical truth. These ideas don't explain metaphor, metaphor explains them. (p. 247)

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1 I found Rorty's definition of meaning useful in understanding both Davidson and Quine: "(meaning is) the property which one attributes to words by noting standard inferential connections between the sentences in which they are used and other sentences." (Rorty, 1991(a): 13) I only need to add that Rorty, in common with most, but not all, writers on metaphor I have read, seems to suppose that context is not worth mentioning.

2 Austin seems not to make explicit reference to metaphor, his references are oblique only. He focuses upon the uses of words, and distinguishes and categorizes those uses. It seems plausible to suppose that he construes metaphor as a use under the suspension of normal conditions: "The normal conditions of reference may be suspended, or no attempt made at a standard perlocutionary act, no attempt to make you do anything, as Walt Whitman does not seriously incite the eagle of liberty to soar." (Austin, 1980: 104) But Austin should be considered as trying to bring language under law, or a set of rules. From my perspective, it is acceptable to make such an effort, but that it will be done within a context of considering action, and its likely success, i.e. the measure to which I might be able to recruit co-workers. One might use such a description to consider the work of social theory. Which is to say that a contribution to social theory should be made in the context of considering a particular (theoretical) task. The evaluations of it should be made within that same context, not generalised to universals.

Austin is credited, just a few pages before, with "...for some years we have been realizing more and more clearly that the occasions of an utterance matters seriously, and that the words used are to some extent to be 'explained' by the 'context' in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic exchange. Yet still perhaps we are too prone to give these explanations in terms of 'the meanings of the words'." (p. 100)

This *is* to put metaphor at the centre of this area! But, unfortunately for my view, Davidson immediately offers some further conciliation to his targets:

Once we understand a metaphor we can call what we grasp the 'metaphorical truth' and (up to a point) say what the 'metaphorical meaning' is. (p. 247)

only to use it to further challenge the received view:

But simply to lodge this meaning in the metaphor is like explaining why a pill puts you to sleep by saying it has dormitive power. (p. 247)<sup>1</sup>

Davidson proceeds by considering, and dismissing, a number of previous descriptions of how metaphor works. His examples include the notion of extended meanings of words in which cases, he says, all sense of metaphor evaporates. Is metaphor a kind of ambiguity? To this he says:

It is hard to see how this theory can be correct. For the ambiguity in the word, if there is any, is due to the fact that in ordinary contexts it means one thing and in the metaphorical context it means something else; but in the metaphorical context we do not necessarily hesitate over its meaning. When we do hesitate, it is usually to decide which of a number of metaphorical interpretations we shall accept; we are seldom in doubt that what we have is a metaphor. At any rate, the effectiveness of the metaphor easily outlasts the end of uncertainty over the interpretation of the metaphorical passage. Metaphor cannot, therefore, owe its effect to ambiguity of this sort. (p. 249)

Davidson hints at a criterion for identifying metaphor:

What does matter is that when mouth applied only metaphorically to bottles, the application made the hearer *notice* a likeness between animal and bottle openings.... Once one has the present use of the word, with literal application to bottles, there is nothing left to notice. There is no similarity to seek because it consists simply in being referred to by the same word. (Davidson 1979: 252)

Davidson's implication here is that his criterion of a metaphor is *whether or not it works like one* on the hearer: What does matter is that the application of the metaphor made the hearer *notice*. Having this psychological criterion available, does not persuade Davidson to use it as a clear criterion as between metaphor and literal language; elsewhere in his paper he writes:

I hold that the endless character of what we call the paraphrase of a metaphor springs from the fact that it attempts to spell out what the metaphor makes us notice, and to this there is no clear end. *I would say the same for any use of language.* (Sacks 1979: 44, n.16) (*emphasis added*)

This footnote directs us to Davidson's view of language more generally. I wish to keep metaphor at the centre and in this respect, language has a secondary place. I therefore offer some extracts of

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<sup>1</sup> Rorty makes an unacknowledged allusion to this in CIS (p. 8).



Davidson's writing on language to try to illustrate its general tenor, bearing in mind that his writing on this subject is extensive and that, over time, his views have developed. He remarked in an interview in 1994:

I maintain that thought itself absolutely depends on a three-way relationship between at least two people and a series of events that are shared in the world. Although I am aware that this seems a commonplace of one's ordinary intuitive picture of how language is learned, it hasn't been taken all that seriously by philosophers. (Borradori 1994: 49)

a remark which links to my view of metaphor as originating in the use of language, voiced somethings, among, or between, a minimum of two in a situation requiring action. Shortly afterwards Davidson wrote:

What is created in dialogue is not a common language but understanding; each partner comes to understand the other. And it also seems wrong to me to say agreement concerning an object demands that a common language be first worked out. I would say: it is only in the presence of shared objects that understanding can come about. Coming to an agreement about an object and coming to understand each other's speech are not independent moments but part of the same interpersonal process of triangulating the world (Davidson 1997: 432).

This statement is redolent of Quine's description of learning a language, and giving additional cause for Rorty to regard Davidson as a pragmatist. I take Davidson to have provided a convincing view of metaphor, one to which my views are but qualifications.

## Chapter 6

### Interim Perspective

*And in philosophy, of which this is almost a definition, I would hold with Bradley that our pretence to do without metaphor is never more than bluff waiting to be called. But if that is a truth, it is easier to utter than to accept with its consequences or to remember.*

Richards, I. A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* 1936: 93

I introduce a short summary here to gather together some aspects of how I have been thinking of metaphor before approaching my last main writer in this section, Richard Rorty.

Metaphor has resisted any wide agreement as concept, yet the last few decades have witnessed a burgeoning of work and interest in metaphor and its related tropes. The many attempts to theorise metaphor have included, *inter alia*, characterizations of metaphor as 'comparison', as 'without meaning', as 'anomaly', as 'speech act', 'loose talk', as 'interaction', as 'intentional category mistakes', as 'efficient utterance', and as 'frame conflict'. Some of these attempts have had the form of trying to assimilate metaphor under a previously existing understanding of language - a move which might itself be considered metaphorical, and hence circular - others see language as one of the consequences of the processes at work in metaphor. This resistance to conceptualizing suggests that it might be more helpful to consider metaphor in terms of its uses, rather than to specify an ontology.

#### Aristotle

From reading Aristotle, I take the idea that metaphor is best understood as a tool, that it has links both to thought and to language. He understood it as "giving a thing a name that belongs to something else", and thought that "the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor." Not all writers have heeded the contexts within which Aristotle wrote. His teacher, Plato, had

sufficient doubts about the value of metaphor that he barred poets from his Republic. Aristotle, by contrast, found uses for metaphor, not only in politics where rhetoric enabled a man to be heard effectively in public, but also in law, where juries were suspicious of evidence which could be faked, and witnesses who could be bribed. They were, rather, influenced by arguments turning around a balance of probabilities, providing an important context for rhetoric. Aristotle cannot easily be read as limiting metaphor to the realm of ornament, or efficiency of utterance: he sees uses for which there is no readily available equivalent paraphrase. "It is from metaphor", he says, "that we can best get hold of new ideas".

We may suppose that Aristotle's description of metaphor as giving something a name which belongs to something else, detailed as: 'the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy', also owed something to his practice as taxonomist of the natural world. Taxonomies are ready-made databases for fresh metaphor. Although Aristotle's comment on Plato's forms that "(to say) they are patterns and the other things share in them is to use empty words and poetical metaphors", *may* be taken as evidence of his ambivalence to metaphor, but should rather be understood as evidence of a variety of rhetorical uses. Aristotle may be understood, in short, as praising metaphor in poetry and drama, in law, in politics and in what we might now refer to as natural science. The emerging picture, for me, is of metaphor as a feature always of action. By functioning as a reminder of past action, whether personal or more widely cultural, this emerging picture contrasts with a view of metaphor as 'ornamental' or as 'efficient utterance', it contrasts with those views which seek to attribute 'cognitive' status, and contrasts with views of metaphor as the direct route to new knowledge of the world. New views, judgements and fresh policies are seldom arrived at, nor agreed, without some part played by metaphor.

I have regarded the subsequent history of metaphor, after Aristotle, until the end of the Renaissance, as best understood as part of the history of rhetoric, paying the price, no doubt, of doing a serious injustice to the Roman thinkers, particularly to Cicero and Quintilian.

### **Early modernity and early resistance to metaphor**

I have accepted, gratefully, that part of the development of rhetoric in 17th century Europe which led to a 'simplification' of the tropes to just four: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony.

The first major philosophy written in English, credited to Thomas Hobbes and his *Leviathan*, published a year after Descartes' death, is severe on the misuse of metaphor and claims that, of the seven causes of absurdity: "The sixth, (is) to the use of metaphors, tropes, and other rhetorical figures, instead of words proper." Yet the opening paragraph of the English version of the text elaborates what Black would later call the 'associated commonplaces' of the title image, *Leviathan*, Hobbes' metaphor for the State. Hobbes was writing in complicated, changing and dangerous times, with differing purposes, addressing different audiences and with changing beliefs, and I drew heavily upon the work of Quentin Skinner in his elucidation of the use of rhetoric in a context of humanism, of the growth of science and the attempt to provide an alternative intellectual structure to that put forward by the church and the scholastics. Hobbes' shifts in his valuation of the tropes are resolved in a view which embraces the imagination set in a context both of sensibilities towards 'times, places and persons' and the uses to which the new imaginings are to be put. The ambivalence towards metaphor noticed in Hobbes, becomes the rejection of metaphor in Locke, who thought that:

all the artificial and figurative application of words... (are) ... in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault. (Locke 1894: Book III Ch.X.34)

- a view finding support in the proceedings of the Royal Society of the time<sup>1</sup>. Whilst I take the view that this ambivalence should be taken as respectful of the power of metaphor, we may say that, in some company, here began a tradition later referred to as the 'purity thesis', one sustained in some circles to the present, but which has relied upon shedding both the social context and use, both of which Hobbes took to be significant.

A generation later, Vico used the notion of metaphor as a tool within philology to produce a theory of 'poetic logic'. This included the notion that naming had been a process of applying terms relating the near and familiar to the less well-known and distant. His examples included the mapping of body-words to features of the natural world- rivers and bottles being given 'mouths' etc. Vico's view led him to reverse the standard relationship of the poetic to the literal: "the overthrow of two common errors of the grammarians: that prose speech is proper speech, and poetic speech improper; and that prose speech came first and afterward speech in verse."

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1 See footnote on page 142

Vico's theory links the actions of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony. Metaphor identifies a new domain of human experience making it possible for metonymy to identify its parts, synecdoche to elaborate the relations between the attributes of parts to the whole, and irony to inspect the earlier practices for their adequacy, by a test of opposition. When irony is correctly detected the new object may be regarded as appropriately established in the consciousness of the person or group. Vico's view that what was made by God was finally unknowable by men, but what men had themselves established could be so known, was linked to his view of metaphor, and also threatened some of the aspirations of the new 'scientists'. Whilst many of Vico's etymologies may be fatally questioned, I take from him a view that languages and cultures have grown and adapted by metaphor, that metaphor sets into our culture a record of successful action in a concealed fashion.

Vico's views were not fully effective until at least the 19th century, but Johann Gottfried Herder, born in the year Vico died held somewhat similar views. Herder's application was not the diachronic one of Vico, but rather the synchronic, through which he came to celebrate differences between cultures and provided an intellectual basis for the beginnings of anthropology and ethnology. With Herder and Vico we enter a period in which the idea that our view of the social world, inhabited by people, made an important break from the natural world in that we can no longer suppose that the social is to be typified, as is the natural, as part of a universe. It now becomes possible to begin to entertain notions of plurality that are not reducible, and may be ultimately in conflict - an idea suggested by Berlin, drawing *inter alia* on Vico and Herder.

Some dissident voices were also heard in England. Coleridge, familiar with the works of contemporary German writers, and having read Vico when in Italy, when asked why he attended Davy's chemistry lectures, replied that he wanted to renew his stock of metaphors<sup>1</sup>, and Shelley,

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1 Kathleen Coburn, lecturing the Royal Institution: "(Coleridge) said he went to Davy's lectures to increase his stock of metaphors." (Coburn gives the reference as Paris, J. A. The Life of Sir Humphrey Davy (1831: 138), on checking, I find that is not the case) "I wonder - without underrating the importance of metaphor to Coleridge - if this was not a jesting bit of one-upmanship in their friendly rivalry? The quips of young men should not necessarily be taken so seriously as they sometimes are in academia, and at a distance in time. In any case, that in this lecture auditorium in 1802 the irrepressible inquirer in Coleridge was clearly fascinated by a chemist's way of presenting concepts through the visual experience of the experiments. And by a chemist's way of thinking about matter" (Coburn 1974: 88). From my point of view, three points may be made. First, that this betrays a resistance to metaphor. Second, that Coburn has not made the link which Cohen made between metaphor, jokes and intimacy. Her remarks about the "quips of young men" now no longer can carry the force that they might have had in 1973. Third, Coburn's reference to the "visual experience of the experiments" draws

in his *Defence of Poetry*, provided a staunch challenging connection between metaphor, language and culture, which I repeat here:

Language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until words, which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thought instead of pictures of integral thoughts: and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have thus been disorganised, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse. (Shelley 1968: 18)

if only to suggest that this may also be taken, analogously, as much to be a 'defence' of 'science'.

### **Nietzsche and Freud**

Nietzsche, adopted as one of my heroes, marked a significant development. Moving beyond both Herder and Vico and their celebration of cultural plurality, extending Shelly's view, and in a Darwinian context, proposed that metaphor also serves a creative and critical plurality. Whereas with earlier writers we may observe that with a change of view of metaphor there seems to be a linked change of the theory of the human being, we saw that with Nietzsche the linkage was explicit. Developing Vico's view, Nietzsche produced his dramatic claim that the drive toward the formation of metaphors is "the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself." (Nietzsche 1979: 88) Nietzsche immediately added no less dramatic a metaphor describing language:

This drive is not truly vanquished and scarcely subdued by the fact that a regular and rigid new world is constructed as its prison from its own ephemeral products, the concepts. (Nietzsche 1979: 89)

In addition to this reversal, we may take from Nietzsche his view of truth as "A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms..." coupled with his view of the development of language in which metaphors come to have their metaphorical status forgotten. Whereas the metaphor for truth, of coin which loses its face, has attracted many writers, few have commented on Nietzsche's phrase 'a sum of human relations' as a description of truth and tropes, a view not incompatible with the work of the Edinburgh school, yet remaining a perception to be explicitly developed. With Nietzsche, I see the beginnings of an identity between truth and agency emerging through his valuation of metaphor. In part, I see this as an invitation to emphasize

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attention to two items, firstly that these 'experiments' are more properly called 'demonstrations' or even 'performances' and secondly that the naming, the public occasions of vocabulary formation are intimately related to events, although, in practice this is 'forgotten'.

Nietzsche's pragmatism, in part, as a way of seeing both as products of "the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought", in part, as the move away from epistemology and towards genealogy, all steps towards Rorty's 'contingency of self'.

Freud, some 12 years younger than Nietzsche, with mutual intimate acquaintances, made the claim that Nietzsche's "guesses and intuitions often agree in the most astonishing way with the laborious findings of psychoanalysis". Whatever that relationship might yet turn out to have been, Freud's work had the effect of applying Nietzsche's perceptions to the 'unconscious', a new metaphor of depth, by drawing upon his classical education to name the associated actions and behaviours, made available ready-made myths to extend and enrich his metaphors. I recognize I. A. Richards as the source for identifying 'transference' as a form of metaphor, to which we may also add 'projection'. In trying to keep metaphor at the centre, I wish to emphasize the role of metaphor, within Freud's 'talking cure', rather than allow 'the unconscious' his metaphor of depth, suspiciously metaphysical, to predominate. Lacan, among others, has begun to redescribe the tropical basis of Freud's works.

### **Natural science exposed as metaphor-dependent**

Quine writing as an empiricist nevertheless thought it: "a mistake, then, to think of language usage as literalistic in its main body and metaphorical in its trimming. Metaphor, or something like it, governs both the growth of language and our acquisition of it" (Quine 1979: 160). Mary Hesse has extensively described the work of metaphor in science as compatible with this view. Max Black offered an 'interactive' theory of metaphor as a development of the 'comparison' view, and further linked metaphor and model, thereby linking the worlds (languages?) of literature and science. Rom Harré, following Black, distinguished models in science into two kinds, homeomorphs which are modelled upon its subject, as is a doll, and paramorphs where the model is only distantly related. In Harré's view, paramorphs, close cousins to metaphor, are creative: homeomorphs have heuristic uses only. Thomas Kuhn is borrowed for his use of 'paradigm', which may be taken, in some of its uses, as a synonym for metaphor, offered a sociological description of natural science. This provided a stimulus for developing a social critique of natural science, in which we noticed, *inter alia* the work of Latour & Woolgar.

## Philosophy and language

Roman Jakobson, drawing upon Saussure's structural view of language<sup>1</sup>, made a distinction between two types of aphasia. In one, the victims have difficulty with the selection of a term and are dependent upon the context, that is on the contiguity of the discourse to continue to be part of it. By contrast, other aphasics, were seen to substitute equivalent terms, i.e., table for lamp, smoke for pipe. Jakobson saw these as examples of metonymy and metaphor on the ground that these were the most condensed expression of the contiguity or similarity distinctions. Metaphor and metonymy, once seen as similar, are thereby now seen as opposed. This led to developments in structuralism for example, by Levi-Strauss in anthropology, by Lacan in psychoanalysis, and David Lodge offered a typology of modern writing based upon the opposition.

Heidegger's writing is rich with metaphor, yet he denied it. He construed the sensory/non-sensory distinction as belonging to metaphysics and drew the conclusion that 'the metaphorical exists only within the boundaries of the metaphysical'. By expressing a preference for the 'poetical' over the 'mathematical', Heidegger has been influential in offering a reading of Nietzsche recovering a role for philosophy by means of what we might identify as metaphor of the kind which, as a sentence, is obviously false: "Philosophy is essentially untimely because it is one of those few things that can never find an echo in the present."

Derrida radicalized Saussure's structural description of language, both in his conceptualizing and also in the style of his writing - in so doing, he matched the congruence in Nietzsche who linked his valuation of metaphor to his style of writing. Derrida's view of language relies upon a play of differences, and understands metaphor as operating within that play of differences - he was unable to use the otherwise conventional distinction between the metaphorical and the literal. His identification of phallogocentrism undermined the metaphor of depth for more perspicuous knowledge, paving the way for a metaphors of breadth. Gadamer, understood as a major contributor to hermeneutics, also wrote of metaphor:

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1 Jakobson connects his view to metaphor and Saussure through applying the latter's vocabulary: "Selection involves the perception of similarity (to group the items of the system into sets) and it implies the possibility of substitution (blouse instead of T-shirt, boats instead of ships). It is therefore the process by which metaphor is generated, for metaphor is substitution based on a certain kind of similarity. (Jakobson 1956: 75)



It is the genius of linguistic consciousness to be able to give expression to these similarities. This is its fundamental metaphorical nature, and it is important to see that it is the prejudice of a theory of logic that is alien to language if the metaphorical use of a word is regarded as not its real sense. (Gadamer 1989: 429)

This view strengthens the possibility of substituting a metaphor of breadth for that of depth to describe knowing and understanding, begun by Derrida.

Whilst it may be interesting to speculate what part the earlier publication of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (1922) might have played in making the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) as influential as it has proved, the former, though built upon metaphor, has no place for it within its closed system, whereas the latter uses metaphor throughout, but without attempting an explicit theory of it. The style of the *Philosophical Investigations* is as if we hear just one side of a conversation - simply a limitation imposed if the writing is not to be that of drama or a novel? Perhaps the *Investigations* will come to be judged as the writing which, more than any other, licensed the growth of academic interest in metaphor.

### **A broader academic response**

Kenneth Burke, following Vico, selected metonymy, irony, metaphor and synecdoche and labelled them the 'Four Master Tropes' and set them to new (as he thought) uses. "It is an evanescent moment that we shall deal with - for not only does the dividing line between the figurative and literal usages shift, but also the four tropes shade into one another. Give a man but one of them, tell him to exploit its possibilities, and if he is thorough in doing so, he will come upon the other three" (Burke 1969: 503). We have also looked at examples of where writers have focused upon the 'poetics' and rhetoric of their academic subject areas, with Brown, Nisbet and Turner in sociology and anthropology, and McCloskey in economics. By contrast, much is owed to Hayden White who developed Vico's insights and applied them to the writing of history providing a most virtuous circle.

### **Vagueness and Ambiguity**

Keeping metaphor at the centre has led to a reappraisal of vagueness and ambiguity. Quine writes in praise of vagueness:

Good purposes are often served by not tampering with vagueness. Vagueness is not incompatible with precision. As Richards has remarked, a painter with a limited palette can achieve more precise renderings by thinning and combining his colours than a mosaic worker

can achieve with his limited variety of tiles, and the skilful superimposing of vaguenesses has similar advantages over the fitting together of precise technical terms" (Quine 1960: 127)

Without vagueness it is difficult to see how we could have learned language as children (Quine 1960: 85). Without vagueness, how would strangers reach agreements (another form of the problem of learning language)? We should be relieved, implies Richards, that:

Most words, as they pass from context to context, change their meanings; and in many different ways. It is their duty and their service to us to do so. Ordinary discourse would suffer ankylosis if they did not, and so far we have no ground for complaint (Richards 1936: 11).

Richards' images are strong ones in this area, he describes the common belief that a word has a meaning of its own as "The Proper Meaning Superstition" (Richards 1936: 11).

Levine has offered an extended exploration of that specific form of vagueness, ambiguity. He tells a story of developments from the seventeenth century onwards, of how:

...administrative needs of centralizing monarchies revived the impetus for legalistic language and led to the compilation of precise codes. Technical developments in warfare and production and the increased use of money in commerce diffused a disposition toward more precise calculation in human transactions. (Levine 1985: 2)

### **Metaphor and 'the social'**

In addition to the specific examples given above, we have, almost in passing, encountered pointers towards a closer association between the metaphorical and the social. Darwin's *Origin of Species*, itself replete with metaphor, natural selection, evolutionary trees etc., provided the opportunity to replace a view of language as correspondence with reality, with that of a series of tools to support survival. Metaphor, in this view, is a tool-making tool. Nietzsche referred to the tropes as 'a sum of human relations'. Ted Cohen has drawn attention to similarities between metaphors and jokes, and to the experience which he called the achievement of intimacy, a view strongly supported by Cooper. Davidson has recently maintained that thought itself absolutely depends on a three-way relationship between at least two people and a series of events that are shared in the world, and Bakhtin has developed a view of language as sustained and developed in particular social relationships, in turn embedded in wider political and economic conditions and, paradigmatically, with consciousness being thought of as inhering in the person-within-the-group. This view allows for full social interaction, including the non-verbal, to be understood as

modifying the associations which attached to the terms deployed in conversation. Wittgenstein's style in the *Philosophical Investigations* is reminiscent of Bakhtin's view. For the time being, it would seem that some kind of ethnographic research will be most suited to explore the human-relational sources of metaphor use, with Bakhtin's perspective suggesting the possibility of developments in ethnomethodology and may easily be extended into a research programme. Some suggestions, focusing on 'conversational realities', have been made by John Shotter and a comprehensive, utopian and pragmatist redescription of modern culture and politics drawing upon the changing status of metaphor, has been offered by Richard Rorty, to whose *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* I now turn.

## Chapter 7

### In Relation to Rorty

*The traditional theory noticed only a few of the modes of metaphor; and limited its application of the term metaphor to a few of them only. And thereby it made metaphor seem to be a verbal matter, a shifting and displacement of words, whereas fundamentally it is a borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts.*

Richards, I. A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* 1936: 94.

#### Introduction and remarks on Rorty's use of metaphor

Richard Rorty, to use one of his preferred terms, is one of my heroes. He has gained for himself a reputation for generosity and courtesy, both from his supporters and detractors. This generosity and courtesy can, however, mislead his more casual readers, or those approaching from contrasting viewpoints<sup>1</sup>. Both Rorty's content and style express more than the courtesy of a thorough-going liberal, they also allow him to write in an engaging and powerful rhetoric and, by virtue of being structured in the form of metaphor, has simultaneously the quality of inviting a conversational engagement, and the potential for further developments in democratization, which latter opportunity he does not develop. We shall miss some aspects of the possibilities of metaphor at work, unless we understand the variety of ways in which Rorty's writing demonstrates those possibilities. What is unclear, in spite of more recent comments by him, is the extent to which Rorty is aware of his rhetorical repertoire. His recent comments, however, include the following:

If I were writing *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* now, I would do my best to avoid the words 'metaphysics' and 'epistemology'. I would try to tell the story entirely by reference to dominant

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1 I have in mind here Norman Geras and his *Solidarity in the Conversation of Mankind* (Geras, 1995). Geras, who significantly mis-quotes Rorty, and seems not to have been well served by his editor.

metaphors and images and not by reference to distinctions between disciplines. ... I hoped, when writing PMN, to treat the history of philosophy in the way Dewey treated it, as a series of reactions to events taking place outside of philosophy. I had hoped to write about the genesis of philosophical problems in a Deweyan way - to show such problems as epiphenomena of attempts to reconcile old metaphors and old ways of thinking with new and startling cultural developments (the Athenian Empire, the Christian religion, the New Science, the French Revolution, Darwin, Freud, and the like). But I got distracted and the book fell between two stools. In the event my book was partly amateurish cultural history and partly an attempt to dissolve certain very particular problems which were being discussed by analytic philosophers in the 1970s. (Rorty 2000: 214)

These recent comments simultaneously confirm, and thereby largely undermine, any originality in my opening thesis that CIS relies more upon metaphor than Rorty had so far acknowledged. But perhaps enough yet remains. We should not allow his restated ambition to cloud one issue of his writing: that his concern is only with "dominant metaphor", that he has little or nothing to say about quotidian metaphor, a feature of his writing which does little to defend him from charges of elitism and contributes to accusations of having "an unwillingness to accept that there is a structured social and natural world of and around human beings and that this is the terrain, the only terrain, on which they may recreate themselves." (Wagner 1994: 152-3). In what follows I will attempt to distinguish my view of metaphor as more extensive than that of Rorty. An alternative reading of Nietzsche's *Truth and Lies* could have linked the private and the social in ways that would have challenged Rorty's view which requires a clear separation between the private ironist and the public liberal. Writing against the idea of seeking 'universal facts of human nature' as a strategy for ethics, Rorty writes,

We should just thank our lucky stars that there are quite a lot of people nowadays who are pretty consistently appalled by human beings suffering unnecessarily. With luck - and especially with affluence and security there will be more and more such people. (Mouffe 1996: 42)

If this should be read as an extension of Rorty's realm of contingency, then I suggest that there remains a tension with Nietzsche's fable in *Truth and Lies*, parts of which he quotes approvingly (e.g. CIS: 17).

In this section I wish, in a first phase, simply to describe Rorty's explicit, published, understanding of metaphor and having done that, to suggest in a second phase, other ways in which Rorty's writing makes use of metaphor. I shall limit this second phase to his *Contingency*,

*Irony and Solidarity* (CIS), in a third phase I wish to discuss aspects of Rorty's writing on solidarity in CIS.

### Hesse and Davidson

Rorty presented a paper in 1987 with the provocative title, *Unfamiliar Noises: Hesse and Davidson on metaphor* - the dividing colon having a lot of work to do. He began by recognizing that:

Philosophers of science like Mary Hesse have helped us realize that metaphor is essential to scientific progress. (Rorty 1991: 162)

He then moved to the down-side of this piece of Hesse's writing. He writes of her as concerned to "argue for the cognitive claims of metaphor" and as "concerned to give metaphorical sentences truth and reference" which he glosses as "to find worlds for them to be about", quoting her without explicit comment:

imaginative symbolic worlds that have relations with natural reality other than those of predictive interest... utopias, fictional "exposés" of the moral features of this world by caricature and other means, and all kinds of myths symbolic of our understanding of nature, society and the gods. (Hesse 1984: 39)

Comment should, however, be made that Hesse's interest is normally as much, or more, in language as it is in science. In the article on which Rorty hangs his comments on Hesse, *The Cognitive Claims of Metaphor*, for a volume to be entitled *Metaphor and Religion*, which might be construed as an invitation to extend her thinking about science and language into the area of religion. In doing so she relies upon an analogy between the practicalities of science and in particular its language, with "the practical interest of personal communication and the emancipatory interest of critique of ideology" (Hesse 1984: 40) these being, as she sees it, proper extensions of "technical interest" the areas in which she believes she has already established the cognitive competence of metaphor; in context, a suitable analogy for exploration. To establish where I part company from Mary Hesse, I see her as confusing two uses of "imaginative symbolic worlds". In the one use, it is seen a 'possible world', a version of the present one, available to the imagination, to 'play', and the ordinary 'reception of metaphor skills' as an heuristic device; in another, it is an alternative world. Expressed differently, the first properly involves recognition of metaphor, the second is space in which a metaphysician is free to work.

Seen this way, I choose the former, preferring to see metaphor as something other than a gateway to metaphysics.

There is another, and perhaps more interesting, view of Hesse's position here. Having previously established very strong claims on behalf of metaphor in the processes of natural science, she recognizes a problem, in that "metaphor poses a radical challenge to contemporary philosophy" (Hesse 1984: 39). Although not presented in this form, we may say that she is identified as a philosopher and supporter of metaphor and now finds herself in her opponents' terraces, and needs to correct that threatening position. The remedy, as she sees it, is to have philosophy provide "a revised ontology and theory of knowledge and truth". This would place her back within her own team's terraces. Looked at another way, Hesse is at risk, not because she is a supporter of metaphor, but because she is not a sufficiently strong supporter of metaphor.

Rorty's complaint is framed differently. He sees Hesse as overvaluing science in wanting to see it as a model for culture more generally and, in consequence, he wishes to apply limitations. In particular, he wishes to limit the applicability of "these semantical terms... to familiar and relatively uninteresting uses of language, to discourses for which there are accepted procedures for fixing belief", a category into which at least normal science - in Kuhn's use of that term - may be gathered.

Insofar as Rorty also thinks of Hesse as weak in her account of metaphor, he diagnoses it as one of following Max Black rather than Donald Davidson, the latter being one of Rorty's acknowledged heroes. Hesse is overly modest; she openly acknowledges her indebtedness to Black's description of metaphor:

The metaphor works by transferring the associated ideas and implications of the secondary to the primary system. These select, emphasise, or suppress features of the primary; new slants on the primary are illuminated; the primary is seen through the frame of the secondary. (Hesse 1980: 115)

She then goes on to make the following point which is unclear as to whether it is a matter solely concerned with the internal working of the metaphor, or whether it also relates to the 'host' language. Insofar as it is the latter, I have not found it in Black:

In accordance with the doctrine that even literal expressions are understood partly in terms of the set of ideas carried by the system they describe, it follows that the associated ideas of the primary are changed to some extent by the use of the metaphor and that therefore even its

original literal description is shifted in meaning. The same applies to the secondary system, for its associations come to be affected by assimilation to the primary; the two systems are seen as more like each other; they seem to interact and adapt to one another, even to the point of invalidating their original literal descriptions if they are understood in the new, post-metaphorical sense. This point is the kernel of the interaction view, and is Black's major contribution to the analysis of metaphor (Hesse 1980: 115)

If it is Hesse's point here that uses of words have the possibility of modifying the subsequent consequences of using those words - a constant shift in what she elsewhere refers to as a network - then metaphor should be regarded as a device for bringing about significant change in word associations and, therefore, 'meanings', for those who are involved in their use. Expressed slightly differently, Hesse's 'network' theory of language is, in effect, a transformation of the network of users. This gives rise to the possibility that the successful use of metaphor in a collectivity of users brings about a more rapid change in the possibilities of the use of their developing vocabularies, and hence change within that collectivity. In this sense the work of metaphor is analogous to sexual, as contrasted with asexual, reproduction.

But before leaving Hesse's account of metaphor with its philosophical research proposal of a revised ontology and theory of knowledge and truth, we should notice Rorty's alternative which is to "find other compliments to pay to other sorts of discourse" (CIS: 163). An alternative which leaves a wide open space for his pragmatist sympathies.

Rorty then elaborates the similarities and differences between Davidson and others, claiming a form of coherence in places and making clear the distance that separates them.

### **Philosophy as Science, Metaphor, Politics**

For Rorty, a philosophical account of metaphor emerges from a discussion of Heidegger and Dewey in relation to Western philosophy. Each opposed foundationalism and, a prime Rortean target, visual metaphors, but did so in radically different ways. Rorty considers:

their different treatments of the relationship between the metaphorical and the literal, and their different attitudes towards the relation between philosophy and politics. By turning from Dewey to a philosopher whose work seems to me to be the best current statement of a pragmatist position - Donald Davidson - I hope to be able to bring out the relevance of a theory of metaphor to the critique of foundationalism. By focusing on Heidegger's assimilation of philosophy to poetry, I hope to bring out the difference between what I have called the 'political' and the 'poetic' answers to the question of our relationship to the philosophic tradition. (Rorty 1991(a): 11-12)

Rorty begins this task by making a curt, dogmatic, claim:



There are three ways in which a new belief can be added to our present beliefs, thereby forcing us to reweave the fabric of our beliefs and desires - viz., perception, inference and metaphor. (Rorty 1991(a): 12)

We should bear in mind that Rorty also thinks of beliefs in terms of habits of action, an understanding not covered by this curt, dogmatic, claim. I take some satisfaction from this close connection between metaphor and habits of action. Rorty then distinguishes between perception and inference on the one hand, from metaphor on the other, by remarking that the former leave our language, our way of dividing up the realm of possibility, unchanged. He sees them as altering the truth values of sentences, but not our repertoire of sentences (p. 12). By contrast:

(metaphor is) a third source of beliefs, and thus a third motive for re-weaving our networks of beliefs and desires (Rorty 1991(a): 12).

We might wonder, at this stage, and ask Rorty what tools he has available for this re-working.

Rorty continues by suggesting that to think of metaphor this way is:

to abandon the idea that the aim of thought as the attainment of a Gods-eye view. (Rorty 1991(a): 12)

Such visual metaphors, says Rorty, contrast with the auditory metaphors which Heidegger preferred in that the latter are better metaphors for metaphor because they suggest that cognition is not always recognition, that the acquisition of truth is not always a matter of fitting data into a pre-established scheme. I admit not to have quite the same attitude to visual metaphors as has Rorty, perhaps we have different characterizations of seeing. I do, however, agree with him about this particular metaphor of a God's-eye view. Neither do I follow his argument about cognition and re-cognition. I hear Wittgenstein's motor cycle, I recognize it, I have heard it before. I suppose that Rorty is thinking of some particular auditory metaphors, not shared here, unless the reference is to the following, which I am happy to accept.

A metaphor is, so to speak, a voice from outside logical space, rather than an empirical filling-up of a portion of that space, or a logical-philosophical clarification of the structure of that space. It is a call to change one's language and one's life, rather than a proposal about how to systematize either. <sup>1</sup> (Rorty 1991(a): 13)

Rorty follows Davidson in rejecting the idea that there is a separate metaphorical meaning, in addition to the literal one, and makes explicit one feature of Davidson's view, that, by rejecting

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<sup>1</sup> It should now be clear that my preferred re-writing of this last sentence would be: "It is an *invitation* to change one's language and one's life..."

the idea that there are metaphorical meanings in addition to literal meanings, it leaves open the possibility of expanding logical space, of bringing about changes of language use (however slowly that might, in some cases, occur).<sup>1, 2</sup>

Rorty has an understanding of meaning here as:

the property which one attributes to words by noting standard inferential connections between the sentence in which they are used and other sentences. (Rorty 1991(a): 13)

a definition which allows him to claim:

that large scale change of beliefs is indistinguishable from large scale change of the meanings of one's words. (Rorty 1991(a): 13)

I suspect that Rorty might have preferred to have expressed this as a change of meanings of one's sentences. There follows a short section plus an extended footnote, which are important for Rorty's view of metaphor and how it works. He writes:

To think of metaphorical sentences as the forerunners of new uses of language, uses which may eclipse and erase old uses, is to think of metaphor as on a par with perception and inference, rather than thinking of it as having a merely heuristic or ornamental function. (Rorty 1991(a): 14)

I interrupt Rorty here to make three points. First, to repeat my own view that language, including metaphor, will finally play a part in a description of human perception<sup>3</sup>. Second, to remark that the accusations against metaphor go beyond that of being merely heuristic or ornamental - they are, according to Locke, "perfect cheats" (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: Book III, Ch. X,

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1 Anything written by Rorty on Davidson should be read in the knowledge that Rorty has been trying hard to recruit Davidson to play for his Pragmatists. See *Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth* (Rorty, 1991) *passim*, an invitation which Davidson has declined on the ground that he sees pragmatism as a form of relativism. See (Davidson 1984: xviii) - a position which Rorty is unable to accept.

2 Fogelin offers an intermediate account starting from the often overlooked remark of Aristotle that similes as well as metaphors are figurative, in a defence of the comparative view of metaphor. Fogelin qualifies Davidson, but insists that the effect of figurative language is obtained by its insistence that the reader /hearer participates. "But the difference between a figurative and a non-figurative comparison does not consist in some new kind of meaning being conveyed, figurative meaning rather than literal meaning. Here we would do better to drop the expression 'figurative meaning' altogether and speak instead of someone putting forward a claim figuratively rather than literally. With non-figurative comparisons, the speaker seeks a good fit that will facilitate the easy transfer of accurate information. More fully, the speaker offers his comparisons under the restraints of Gricean conversational maxims. With a figurative comparison the speaker flouts, or at least violates, standard conversational rules and thus engages the respondent in the task of making adjustments that will produce a good fit. The difference here is not between two kinds of meaning, but rather between two modes of entertaining and validating a comparison. Speakers speak figuratively, but words do not have figurative meanings." (Fogelin 1988: 96)

3 I continue to be influenced by a remark of Richard Gregory: "It may be that language and vision are indeed based on common ground and that the basic problems of both must be solved together." (Gregory 1974: 629)

§34.). Third, and last, to record what Rorty has to say about ascribing the notion of cognitive function to metaphor. Of the previously cited sentence, Rorty comments:

But this is not to say that it has a cognitive function, if this means telling us something, answering a previously formulated question. Its contribution to cognition is rather to give us a sentence which we are tempted to try to literalize by changing the truth-values of, so to speak, various surrounding sentences. Davidson says about attempts to give cognitive content to metaphors: "But in fact there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention, and much of what we are caused to notice is not propositional in character. When we try to say what a metaphor means, we soon realise that there is no end to what we want to mention." (*Inquiries*, p.263) ... The attempt to think of metaphors as telling us something is the attempt to think of pictures or metaphors as being interchangeable with a set of sentences, instead of as providing (as do surprising perceptual data) a challenge to (a) redistribute truth values among familiar sentences, and (b) invent further unfamiliar sentences. (Rorty 1991(a): 14, n.16)

One of the key encouraging texts that I came across in my reading was the essay *Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, as I have discussed in the section on Nietzsche above. Rorty approaches this same text in the following way:

If all you are interested in is epistemology and philosophy of language, as opposed to moral and social philosophy, it will not make much difference to your subsequent conduct whether you read Nietzsche or the classical pragmatists. Further, it is as easy to graft the later, linguistified pragmatists - Quine, Putnam, Davidson - onto Nietzsche as it is to graft them on to Dewey. Indeed, when you switch over from Deweyan talk of experience to Quinean-Davidsonian talk of sentences, it becomes easier to get the point of Nietzsche's famous remark, in "Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral sense," that truth is "a mobile army of metaphors." (Rorty 1991(a): 2-3)

It will be clear, I trust, that I cannot take the "mobile army of metaphors" aphorism out of context, as does Rorty here. In so doing, he relegates Nietzsche to the realm of "epistemology and philosophy of language". Nietzsche's remark should be read in context, as set in a discourse of moral and social philosophy.

Rorty likens his view of Nietzsche's remark, to his view of Davidson:

I take its point to be that sentences are the only things that can be true or false, that our repertoire of sentences grows as history goes along, and that this growth is largely a matter of the literalization of novel metaphors. Thinking of truth in this way helps us switch over from a Cartesian-Kantian picture of intellectual progress (as a better and better fit between mind and the world) to a Darwinian picture (as an increasing ability to shape the tools needed to help the species to survive, multiply and transform itself. (Rorty 1991(a): 3)

The above sketch, which is not exhaustive but simply indicative of Rorty's 'take' on metaphor, might be helpful as I now turn to discuss that of Rorty's texts which I have found most stimulating.

## Contingency, Irony and Solidarity - CIS

I take this to be an essay which sustains a positive view of metaphor, one in which Rorty describes his liberal utopia<sup>1</sup>. I hope that, by discussing it, I shall both become clearer as to my own views in relation to social thought and, in so doing, to reveal them. His earlier *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (Mirror)* (Rorty 1980), is an important precursor of CIS both from my perspective and from Rorty's own. Since *Mirror*, Rorty has continued to move towards valuing metaphor for its effects, for good or ill. CIS is very broad in its scope; read one way, it aims to provide a radical alternative both to traditional philosophy, taken to be the Plato-Kant corpus, and as an alternative to religion, particularly Christianity: read another way, it aims to keep that which has been described as post-modern, a term Rorty rather regrets using, in touch with the modern. The two readings are not mutually exclusive. The fault line, at which Rorty plies throughout, is what he describes as the attempt to fuse the public and the private (CIS: xiii)<sup>2</sup>. Rendering this attempt problematic requires, Rorty suggests, the denial of an assumption of a common human nature if a striving for individual perfection is to be united with a sense of community. Using Nietzsche as an exemplar, Rorty immediately displays a characteristic to be found throughout, that of being very selective as to the writers he chooses, and also very selective as to those parts of their work he uses and praises, implying that the total work of a writer need not be taken to be internally consistent - a matter he will later discuss explicitly. Of Nietzsche, Rorty says that his scepticism urges us to see metaphysics and theology as transparent attempts to make altruism look more reasonable than it is (CIS: xiii). Yet, he says, "such sceptics typically have their own theories of human nature...that there is something common to all human

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- 1 Rorty is explicit that he is describing a utopia, e.g., in his Introduction he writes: "One of my aims in this book is to suggest the possibility of a liberal utopia" (CIS: xv). Not all of Rorty's critics observe this, they read it as a programme, e.g., Raymond Plant concludes: "Despite Rorty's philosophical virtuosity it is not clear that a defense of liberal society which can depend on seeing it as giving us a set of institutions to cope with contingency, as opposed to providing us with positive principles which we believe to be right, is going to be a compelling basis for arguing with those who live within liberal society but reject the contingency which in Rorty's view lies at its heart" [Plant, 1992 #129]. In fairness to these critics, it should perhaps be added that, so far as I can discern, Rorty issues no caveat as to the appropriateness of reading CIS as programme. However, Rorty makes himself a hostage to fortune, when he writes: "The method is to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways...." (CIS: 9) which, at first sight, does seem to be offering something akin to such a programme.
  - 2 In the remainder of this chapter, references to *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* will be shown as (CIS).

beings" (CIS: xiii). I take this internal dividing of writers to be an important part of Rorty's rhetoric and of his use of metaphor.

Moving from sceptics like Nietzsche to historicists since Hegel, Rorty sees the latter denying:

that there is such a thing as human nature or the deepest level of the self. Their strategy has been to insist that socialization, and this historical circumstance, goes all the way down - that there is nothing beneath socialization or prior to history which is definatory of the human. (CIS: xiii)

This historicist turn, asserts Rorty, has:

helped free us, gradually but steadily, from theology and metaphysics... It has helped us substitute Freedom for Truth as the goal of thinking and of social progress. (CIS: xiii)

He groups Nietzsche with both Heidegger and Foucault as historicists in whom the desire for self-creation, for private autonomy, predominates. Dewey and Habermas he takes as examples of historicists in whom the desire for a more just and free human community dominates, and who are inclined to see the desire for private perfection as *infected* with irrationalism and aestheticism<sup>1</sup>. The single-mindedness of his strategy becomes clearer as Rorty describes his task:

This book tries to do justice to both groups of historicist writers. I urge that we not try to choose between them but, rather, give them equal weight and then use them for different purposes. (CIS: xiv)

Insofar as this is the application of a set of tools from one situation being applied to another, this is a further example of Rorty's use of metaphor. Having previously suggested an internal division within individual writers' work, Rorty now divides his selected class of historicist writers explicitly:

Authors like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Proust, Heidegger, and Nabokov are useful as exemplars, as illustrations of what private perfection - a self-created, autonomous, human life - can be like. Authors such as Marx, Mill, Dewey, Habermas, and Rawls are fellow citizens rather than exemplars. (CIS: xiv)

I said earlier that this tactic by Rorty of dividing what is normally left whole, is an important part of his rhetoric, of his thinking. I shall now try to say why I think this.

One of Rorty's preferred techniques is that which he refers to as "recontextualization", this I understand as a near-synonym for metaphor. Ogden and Richards made the point as:

Whenever a term is thus taken outside the universe of discourse for which it has been defined, it becomes a metaphor, and may be in need of a fresh definition. Though there is more in

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1 In so doing, Rorty reveals that he isn't beyond inserting the occasional pejorative metaphor.

metaphor than this, we have here an essential feature of *symbolic* metaphorical language.  
(Ogden and Richards 1969: 111)

We have seen other concealed metaphors employed unproblematically - particular groups of writers are to be given equal weight and then used for different purposes - writers and their writings are tools, not sources of information. But it is probably the case that each time a division is effected, the potential for new metaphors, or unfamiliar sentences, as Rorty occasionally refers to them, arising, is increased. But, we may ask, didn't he do this once before, without our noticing? Didn't this strategy of dividing begin just before line one of the *Introduction*? Isn't the original division between public and private just such a division? And being divided, is it not now offering a metaphorical potential? Seen like this, Rorty's book becomes one prolonged invitation to use metaphor. Nietzsche, it will be recalled, used a related situation in *Truth and Lie* to show a previously unrecognized role for metaphor. But this is not to undermine CIS, it is, from my point of view, reason to continue to praise it. Re-titled as *Metaphor in Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* it meets my needs very well. But, and it is a large but, Rorty puts forward claims that the division between public and private should be regarded as more than a mere rhetorical device. So, I need to look again at Rorty's arguments.

Examining Rorty's arguments, let us consider the division of the writers into the groups 'fellow citizens' and 'exemplars'. Rorty writes:

We shall only think of these two kinds of writers as *opposed* if we think that a more comprehensive philosophical outlook would let us hold self-creation and justice, private perfection and human solidarity, in a single vision. (CIS: xiv)

And with this I have no immediate quarrel, other than with his use of 'vision'.<sup>1</sup> For Rorty, 'vision' is replaceable by 'theory' and *vice versa*, and each may be taken, on occasion, as guilty by association with the other. He continues:

There is no way in which philosophy, or any other theoretical discipline, will ever let us do that. The closest we will come to joining these two quests is to see the aim of a just and free society as letting its citizens be as privatistic, irrationalist, and aestheticist as they please so long as they do it on their own time - causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged. (CIS: xiv)

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1 We would expect Rorty to have avoided this vocabulary: he has written often against the use of visual metaphors.

And with this, too, I have no immediate quarrel, other than with his use of “theoretical” and the work he wants to do with it. Rorty goes on to agree that practical measures can be taken to accomplish this practical goal. Yes, that is the stuff of politics. Where then do we diverge? I am made to pause when Rorty re-makes his point in terms of vocabulary, a term to which he will have frequent recourse during the rest of CIS. He writes:

But there is no way to bring self-creation together with justice at the level of theory. The vocabulary of self-creation is necessarily private, unshared, unsuited to argument. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily public and shared, a medium for argumentative exchange.  
(CIS: xiv)

Here, I am suspicious. I am reluctant to concede that we may simply divide vocabularies in the way Rorty does here, without some qualification. Some blurring of the divide is called for. Elsewhere, Rorty writes in praise of Donald Davidson’s views of language or, perhaps better phrased, of human skills with “sounds and marks”. I find it difficult to imagine any very clear ways in which words used in a vocabulary of self-creation can be entirely divorced from the use of those same words in other contexts. This distinction by Rorty seems therefore to be a rhetorical one. In other circumstances, we might suppose that he creates this division for ‘theoretical’ reasons. The success in the physical sciences and technology of atomism seems still to have its effect on Rorty here: the strategy of creating further divisions (distinctions) is left-over from his time as a more conventional analytical philosopher. Were he to follow his own advice, he should prefer a new metaphor to a further analytic distinction, or perhaps look to better metaphors to cross his divide.

We should also look a little more closely at Rorty’s use of ‘vocabulary’. Metaphor may be playing a role here which Rorty either does not notice, or prefers to overlook. The word ‘vocabulary’, as used by Rorty, gives every appearance of residing in the lexicon of language. Even as I write that, I know that for many purposes ‘lexicon’ and ‘vocabulary’ may be regarded as synonyms. Here, I am suggesting that the word ‘vocabulary’, as used here by Rorty, should be questioned on the ground that it serves to conceal that language is a human social practice. To describe something as the ‘vocabulary of X’ is to make an empirical statement about which words tend to get used in which situations, it is to say nothing about what we might call, in other circumstances, language. The form of metaphor at work here is reification. For many purposes there may be no important

consequence to reifying a human social practice but it can, as here, become a source of illusory legitimization for an argument. I do not wish, at this point, to judge Rorty's claim about any linkage which might, or might not, be possible between 'self-creation' and 'justice'. I only wish to claim that by attending to metaphor we may offer a possible critique which may not be available in any other way.

My earlier claim that Rorty relies more on metaphor than he supposes would be strengthened, within an Aristotelian view of the use of metaphor, in that redescription between vocabularies - a major part of Rorty's programme - seems to be a good description of metaphor.

But these are somewhat minor niggles. Turning just one page, and still within his introduction, Rorty writes:

This process of coming to see other human beings as "one of us" rather than as "them" is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and of redescription of what we ourselves are like. *This is not a task for theory* but for genres such as ethnography, the journalist's report, the comic book, the docudrama, and, especially, the novel. (*emphasis added*) (CIS: xvi)

and the next paragraph begins:

In my liberal utopia, this replacement (of the sermon and treatise by the novel, the movie and the TV programme as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress) would receive a kind of recognition which it still lacks. That recognition would be part of *a general turn against theory* and toward narrative. (*emphasis added*) CIS: xvi)

It seems as if I am responding to Rorty's use of 'theory' and its cognates. Whatever else is happening here, Rorty is also rhetorically undermining theory, if only his own use of it. Theory, we might suspect, is an activity carried on where natural language is artificially constrained, and is not to be admitted into the social world, but is to be replaced by imagination and narration. If by "a general turn against theory and toward narrative", Rorty wishes to privilege statements of action over speculations about essences of natural objects, I have no objection. Nor do I object if he is simply preferring Vico's re-introduction of myth over 'scientism'. But his one reference to Vico: "I would claim that the fact that Level 2 makes sense for text but not for lumps, is the kernel of truth in Vico's insight that the human realm is genuinely knowable while the realm of nature is not" (Rorty 1991) (p. 87) reveals a form of analysis "kernel of truth' which he has elsewhere derided.

He generally accepts Derrida's term 'phallogocentric' and its implications. The most recent



example, known to me, of this support is taken from an explication of his reasons for championing Gadamer's slogan "Being that can be understood is language," is probably :

From the Greeks to the present, this process has usually been described with the help of phallogocentric metaphors of depth. The deeper and more penetrating our understanding of something, so the story goes, the further we are from appearance and the closer to reality. The effect of adopting Gadamer's slogan is to replace these metaphors of depth with metaphors of breadth: the more descriptions that are available, and the more integration between these descriptions, the better our understanding of the object identified by any of these descriptions..... Idealism only acquired a bad name because it was slow to abandon the appearance-reality distinction. Once this distinction is set aside, idealism and nominalism become two names for the same philosophical position. (Rorty 2000: 24)

I offer this citation at some length, for I take it that in his remark that: "the more descriptions that are available, and the more integration between these descriptions, the better our understanding of the object identified by any of these descriptions", we have an acceptable redescription of the processes of theorizing.

### Contingency of language

In certain respects, we might think of Rorty as a somewhat '*laissez-faire*' writer, or theorist.

Preferring to write of changing beliefs, rather than of knowledge, and availing himself of an increasingly common metaphor, Rorty writes:

The world can, once we have programmed ourselves with a language, cause us to hold beliefs.  
(CIS: 6) <sup>1</sup>

Remarking that the world cannot propose a language for us to speak, nor tell us what language games to play, but that these considerations should not lead us to think that these decisions are arbitrary, nor the expression of something deep within us, Rorty writes:

Europe did not *decide* to accept the idiom of Romantic poetry, or of socialist politics, or of Galilean mechanics. That sort of shift was no more an act of will than it was a result of argument. Rather, Europe gradually lost the habit of using certain words and gradually acquired the habit of using others. (CIS: 6)

This phrase 'lost the habit' parallels another frequent idiom that Rorty uses viz. that of 'dropping' certain ways of speaking. Each idiom encourages one simply not to search for 'reasons' for

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1 Which metaphor undertakes much beguiling work. The reification involved in 'language' is still present with all that that involves, and the suggestion that the ways in which we acquire the skills of languaging, muddling, making mistakes, building bridges that wobble when walked on, etc. is anything like the unforgiving, top-down accuracy required of programming, is evidence, not only of Rorty's inexperience with programming, but also of one of the limits of metaphor, that it requires common, better shared, experience for its full communicative / constructive effects.

action, if by that is intended a successful appeal to an example of what Derrida calls phallogocentric language. Rorty would, no doubt, like to encourage in his readers the use of both these idioms, these metaphors of 'losing habits' and 'dropping' ways of speaking, metaphors which encourage one not to seek for 'reasons'.

By way of example, and citing Thomas Kuhn's *The Copernican Revolution*, Rorty claims that:

...we did not decide on the basis of some telescopic observations, or on the basis of anything else, that the earth was not the centre of the universe, that microscopic behaviour could be explained on the basis of microstructural motion, and that prediction and control should be the principal aim of scientific theories. (CIS: 6)

and he offers, instead, that:

Rather, after a hundred years of inconclusive muddle, the Europeans found themselves speaking in a way which took these interlocked theses for granted. (CIS: 6)

which is, of course, no explanation. Read one way, it is simply a redescription of the opening problem, which I take to be the question: What account can we give for progress and/or changed beliefs? Seeing this from the point of view of holding metaphor at the centre, we might venture the hypothesis that the Europeans did come to speak of "these interlocked theses" in the way that they did, precisely because through the work of metaphor, they did see them as interlocked theses. Whatever the truth might have been as to Newton's apple having a causal or simply a later heuristic relation to the theory of gravity, is beside the point; both speak for metaphor. It seems to me that Rorty (of all writers!) is resisting the evidence of the work of metaphor here. While considering Rorty's use of Kuhn's *Copernican Revolution*, there is another point to make. Rorty's use allows something else to 'drop' out of sight. His description ignores or, perhaps more generously, allows to remain out of focus, (metaphor has a scope which is both large and flexible and allows for alternatives to be considered without rancour) the interaction between language and action, between vocabulary and technology.

Another of Rorty's 'compound' uses of metaphor is to be found at the beginning of his next paragraph:

The temptation to look for criteria is a species of the more general temptation to think of the world, or the human self, as possessing an intrinsic nature, an essence. (CIS: 6)

By 'compound' uses of metaphor, I refer to the use of metaphors which are, so to speak, already metaphors. The example here turns around the word 'species'. It is, so to speak, a metaphor for

metaphor. To look for a species, in the sense that Rorty uses it here, is to go looking for metaphors. It is an extended use of metaphor, encouraging others to join in. For Rorty, an 'essence' is a word in the vocabularies of metaphysics - and he has 'dropped' metaphysics. At the end of this section Rorty returns again to the significance of vocabularies. He writes:

But if we could ever become reconciled to the idea that most of reality is indifferent to our descriptions of it, and that the human self is created by the use of a vocabulary rather than being adequately or inadequately expressed in a vocabulary, then we should at last have assimilated what was true in the Romantic idea that truth is made rather than found. (CIS: 7)

He comments on this as follows:

What is true about this claim is just that *languages* are made rather than found, and that truth is a property of linguistic entities, of sentences. (CIS: 7)

The reification of language remains, but language has been modified, the reification has been partly deconstructed, it is said to be made rather than found, it is a product, no longer an item in the natural world. In a footnote to this paragraph Rorty goes some way to conceding my complaint about reification of language and the boundaries of vocabularies:

I have no criterion of individuation for distinct languages or vocabularies to offer, but I am not sure that we need one. (CIS: 7 n.1)

Rorty remains a pragmatist, he continues:

Philosophers have used phrases like "in the language *L*" for a long time without worrying too much about how one can tell where one natural language ends and another begins, nor about when "the scientific vocabulary of the sixteenth century" ends and "the vocabulary of the New Science" begins. Roughly, a break of this sort occurs when we start using "translation" rather than "explanation" in talking about geographical or chronological differences. This will happen whenever we find it handy to start mentioning words rather than using them - to highlight the difference between two sets of human practices by putting quotation marks around elements of those practices. (CIS: 7, n.1)

Having begun by saying that he had no criterion for individuation, he then offers one. It is a distinction which turns around 'mentioning' words rather than using them. The 'mention / use' distinction, to which Rorty adverts here, stands on the border of the ordinary understanding of language. By saying that "This will happen whenever we find it handy to start mentioning words rather than using them..." Rorty reverts to his pragmatism as a way of applying bandage to language. More courteously, Rorty's method of dealing with the 'problematics' which will include the 'reification' of language, is first to describe it as thoroughly contingent and then to be thoroughly pragmatist. The connection with metaphor here is that there is a sense in which the

use of the 'vehicle' term in a metaphor might be said to be an occasion of 'mentioning' a word. In this context, this suggests that the choice of criterion for distinguishing vocabularies involves something like a metaphorical process.

The juxtaposition by Rorty of the contingency of language to aspects of pragmatism, encourages me to introduce here the beginnings of what I earlier called, unapologetically, a happy symbiosis between metaphor and pragmatism. In some of the extracts that I shall reproduce from CIS, I shall insert two symbols (*M*) and (*P*). These always appear together and are, somewhat unimaginatively, chosen to draw attention to an example of metaphor (*M*) and a related pragmatist adjunct (*P*). As a preliminary example, part of Rorty's redescription of the processes of cultural change in the last two hundred years is expressed as:

What the Romantics expressed as the claim that imagination, rather than reason, is the central human faculty was the realization that a talent for speaking differently (*M*), rather than arguing well, is the chief instrument of cultural change (*P*). (CIS: 7)

This description parallels Heidegger's preference for 'poetry' rather than for 'mathematics'. But the sub-text, perhaps both for Rorty and Heidegger, includes a hidden dependency upon metaphor, for the reasons given, *inter alia*, by Aristotle:

Now strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of new ideas. (Aristotle 1984:1410b11 -12)

Sometimes these symbols (*M*) and (*P*) will stand without comment, and this probably calls for some justification. It seems that from my perspective of keeping metaphor at the centre, Rorty has, whether fully conscious of it or otherwise, a powerful strategy at work. I do not care, at this stage, to state the relation between the use of metaphor alongside the adoption of pragmatism, any more clearly than as one of symbiosis, beyond simply noticing, as might a gossip columnist, that they were both present at the same events<sup>1</sup>. This, seemingly over-cautious, strategy has a rationale. For me to suggest that there is an important process occurring, is to suggest, in our vernacular, that I think I have got something right. And, in that sense, I think I have. But I also have a problem with that. My problem is, as Rorty clearly realises for his own writing, that if I were to claim to have got something right, I would be claiming something which it is my purpose, in part, to argue against. It is not my purpose, here, to argue in favour of pragmatism, I

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1 Perhaps the phrase 'gossip columnist' was not available to Hume?

am simply trying to make a case for holding metaphor at the centre of one's awareness of the world and, in so doing, I find a partner in pragmatism, or so I allege. So, something like pragmatism has hitched a ride, at least for while. So long as that is the case, I will not claim to have got something right. I need, instead, a form of words which cannot easily taken to be a synonym of "I think I have got something right", and which also manages to avoid the puerile, i.e., contextually inappropriate, "suck it, and see." Whatever this form of words turns out to be, it will have to be related to a strategy which undermines what I take to be a widespread, and regrettable, feature of the culture in which I have lived and worked, namely, an assumption that the proper attitude towards a successful involvement with the world is one modelled upon the natural sciences, and upon a perception of language that such a model is thought to entail. Coupled with this there is a further, illusory, analogy: that language, reified again, is a conduit through which knowledge (reified?) can pass from one person to another.<sup>1</sup>

To say that there is no such thing as intrinsic nature (*M*) is not to say that the intrinsic nature of reality has turned out, surprisingly enough, to be extrinsic. It is to say that the term 'intrinsic nature' is one which it would pay us not to use (*P*), an expression which has caused more trouble than it is worth. (CIS: 8)<sup>2</sup>

Keeping metaphor at the centre, I am beginning to recognize, has implications for how I have come to view language. There are some corollaries of former ways of thinking that I shall be obliged to drop. Edward Abbey, writing about life in deserts, captures one aspect succinctly: "What is that, madam? What it is, no one knows; but men call it the creosote bush, *Larrea tridentata*." (Abbey 1992). This reply reminds us that we do not know the intrinsic, the essence, but that we do have names for things that suggest relations to other things, with an implication: for a set of chosen (human) purposes - a species of knowing not far removed from Nietzsche's "sum of human relations."

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- 1 Michael J. Reddy has argued against what he terms the 'conduit metaphor' of language, by identifying the container and signal imagery in English vocabulary and idiom of language. He counterposes a 'toolmaker' metaphor. This leads him to deny that artefacts 'contain' any culture, nor do they 'transmit' culture. This has the effect of re-evaluating a humanist education, in which an emphasis is placed upon the person who reconstructs the signals. The person is both the site of the reconstruction, the repository of culture and, by implication, though Reddy does not say this, the author of the modifications to it. (Reddy, 1993)
  - 2 Geras is mistaken when he claims: "Integral to the general anti-foundationalist theme is Rorty's insistence that nothing can have an intrinsic nature; the latter notion is, according to him, no more than a remnant of the idea of God." (Geras 1995: 2) Rorty's point here is not that things do not have an intrinsic nature, but rather that we may drop the idea of an intrinsic nature because, as he puts it here, it is "an expression which has caused more trouble than it is worth."

A corollary of this change is described as providing a “method” for philosophy as “the same as (that) of utopian politics or revolutionary science (as opposed to parliamentary politics, or normal science).” The method is:

to describe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behaviour which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of non-linguistic behaviour.... (CIS: 9)

Read one way, i.e. as a general statement about what might be profitable, I do not wish to quarrel with this. There might be some infelicities which could have been avoided. For example, I am not aware that metaphor creation and recognition is necessarily limited to particular age-groups, nor even usefully so connected. Nor do I imagine that in the case of successful metaphor generation and recognition, is subsequent action necessarily so distantly related that it is appropriate to say of it that a distant grouping, “the rising generation”, are caused “to look for” appropriate new forms of behaviour. The connection between metaphor and action is sometimes so close as to defy an easy recognition of a dividing space. I simply think that Rorty has sidled past something on his way, something which we should notice, concerned as we are with keeping the focus on metaphor. The something that Rorty has sidled past without mentioning, is that we are all capable of using metaphor, that it is an everyday occurrence, for all of us, and that in our own lives we frequently seek new forms of behaviour, this is how we live ordinarily and that any view which we have to the contrary is illusory, an illusion serving particular interests. Or so I allege. An allegation which points to the possible usefulness of investigation, by means of those practices commonly ascribed to, or claimed by, ethnographers. Such a suggestion calls for a possible programme and an appraisal of ethnography as an appropriate strategy. The qualifications which I here offered to Rorty’s proposal provide a somewhat modified outcome. Rorty’s route leads to:

... for example, the adoption of new scientific equipment or new social institutions.” (CIS: 9)

with which I have no other quarrel than already given. Rorty offers some caveats to qualify his proposals:

This sort of philosophy does not work piece by piece, analysing concept after concept, or testing thesis after thesis. Rather, it works holistically (*M*) and programmatically (*P*). (CIS: 9)

Quite. And, to use a visual analogy, it is rather more like comparing the works of different painters. Rorty's aphorism, that his new philosophy "works holistically and programmatically" is convenient as an example of how he links metaphor and pragmatism. To do something holistically is to treat parts as wholes, a definition of metaphor owed to Aristotle, even though more recent rhetoricians and grammarians might prefer to speak of synecdoche: to act programmatically, in the appropriate sense, is to act pragmatically.

I think that I have not yet fully stated my difference with Rorty, or perhaps I have to go on pressing my own point. So long as Rorty speaks only on behalf of 'philosophy', a term with which he seems no longer entirely to be comfortable,<sup>1</sup> I suppose that I need not press my point further, but insofar as what he writes may be taken to extend beyond that restricted field, then I need to try to make my view clearer. For example, when Rorty says: "It does not pretend to have a better candidate for doing the same old things which we did when we spoke in the old way", in one respect, I do think we have a better candidate, we have metaphor operating within a different understanding of language, linked to criteria based upon pragmatism, and it is not only philosophy which has access to this combination.

Rorty sites his discussion of the contingency of language within a setting familiar to readers of his earlier *Mirror*. Metaphor makes an early entry, albeit of minor kind. Having divided philosophers into two kinds:

(the one kind) take science as the paradigm human activity, and they insist that natural science discovers truth rather than makes it. They regard "making truth" as a merely metaphorical, and thoroughly misleading phrase. ... Whereas the first kind of philosopher contrasts "hard scientific fact" with the "subjective" or with "metaphor." The second kind sees science as one more human activity, rather as the place at which human beings encounter a "hard," nonhuman reality. On this view, great scientists invent descriptions of the world which are useful for purposes of predicting and controlling what happens, just as poets and political thinkers invent other descriptions of it for other purposes. (CIS: 3-4)

Then Rorty makes his way towards vocabulary, but this time via truth:

To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations. (CIS: 5)

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1 Rorty still has uses for philosophy professors, though re-cast into a literary context. He sees a need for those who are in a position to help the next generation read the writings of those categorized heretofore as philosophers.

The previously mentioned reification apart, I have no reason to comment on this. Rorty takes his next step in the form:

it is easy to run together the fact that the world contains the causes of our being justified in holding a belief with the claim that some nonlinguistic state of the world is itself an example of truth, or that some such state “makes a belief true” by “corresponding” to it. But it is not so easy when we turn from individual sentences to vocabularies as wholes. (CIS: 5)

So we are to use the term ‘vocabularies’ because it is harder to capitalize vocabularies than single words? These first few pages of Rorty’s chapter are a very rich tapestry, or simply very confusing, there are so many themes in play at the same time, and trying to unravel them seems a very pedestrian activity, if not a form of vandalism. So, if what follows seems arbitrary in its structure, while much of that may be blamed on me, some of it is owed to Rorty. Vico’s writing, as has already been mentioned, has a similar quality, and the ideas are also within reach of one another.

### Contingency of selfhood

This chapter follows from the *Contingency of Language*. Introducing his ideas earlier, Rorty has said:

I shall be describing the work of Donald Davidson in philosophy of language as a manifestation of a willingness to drop the idea of “intrinsic nature,” a willingness to face up to the *contingency* of the language we use. In subsequent chapters, I shall try to show how a recognition of that contingency leads to a recognition of the contingency of conscience, and how both recognitions lead to a picture of intellectual and moral progress as a history of increasingly useful (*P*) metaphors (*M*) rather than of increasing understanding of how things really are. (CIS: 9) <sup>1</sup>

On the first page of *The Contingency of Selfhood*, Rorty sets the context for his argument. From Larkin’s work he chooses a poem, part of which which he takes to illustrate a distinction he wishes to make and which he labels as “the quarrel between poetry and philosophy”. This is seen as:

the tension between an effort to achieve self-creation by the recognition of contingency and an effort to achieve universality by the transcendence of contingency. (CIS: 25)

from the poem he identifies two notions, a fear of death and the metaphor of a ‘lading-list’. Rorty has only a limited notion of the latter, which he glosses as Larkin’s “individual sense of what was

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1 It might be taken as unduly pedantic to call attention to some circularity here. The notion of “moral progress as a history of increasingly useful metaphors”, begs questions about usefulness for what goals? I would have fewer problems with the idea of the history of morals as a history of increasingly useful metaphors.



possible and important". A lading-list, is more than simply a list, it is a plan of a vessel and its contents loaded with the intended voyage considered, so as to be able to unload and load cargo at each port of call without first having to move yet other cargo. The metaphor is more complex, and richer, than Rorty supposes. It is a candidate to add to Blumenberg's list<sup>1</sup>. Rorty then engages with Larkin's project and, in so doing, Larkin becomes, in effect, an example of Rorty's archetypal person, whom Rorty identifies as "any poet - any maker, anyone who hopes to create something new... Anyone who spends his life trying to formulate a novel answer to the question of what is possible and important..." (CIS: 23) Again Rorty, almost by a sleight of hand, is concerned with a member of a limited group, in effect an elite. He has also selected a subject whom he will use to display a theory drawn from Harold Bloom.

There are some twenty explicit references to Bloom in the index of CIS, more than half of which are to the twenty pages of the *Contingency of Selfhood*. Bloom offers "a theory of poetry" and is concerned only with those whom he calls strong poets:

My concern is only with strong poets, major figures with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death. Weaker talents idealize; figures of capable imagination appropriate for themselves. But nothing is got for nothing, and self-appropriation involves the immense anxieties of indebtedness, for what strong maker desires the realization that he has failed to create himself? (Bloom 1997: 5)

So, the second writer Rorty appropriates (I ignore a brief, and pejorative, reference to Epicurus) is also interested in an elite. Bloom's project has to do with the development of a view of how his studied writers relate to each other's work. He supposes that the worst outcome for these writers is that they should remain only as copiers of others' work - in Rorty's use of Larkin:

One will not have impressed one's mark on the language but, rather, will have spent one's life shoving about already coined pieces. So one will not really have had an I at all. One's creations, and one's self, will just be better or worse instances of familiar types. (CIS: 24)

Bloom acknowledges the influence of both Nietzsche and Freud. That is, he offers them as his precursors whom he must misread, from whom he must 'swerve', so as not to be merely a copier of them (though he omits this observation). He claims *The Genealogy of Morals* as "the profoundest study available to me of the revisionary and ascetic strains in the aesthetic temperament" (Bloom 1997: 8). But very quickly announces his 'swerve' from Nietzsche:

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1 That is to: *Shipwreck with Spectator* (*Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer*) (Blumenberg 1997)

Yet, the theory of influence expounded here is un-Nietzschean in its deliberate literalism, and in its Viconian insistence that priority in divination is crucial for every strong poet, lest he dwindle away into merely a latecomer (Bloom 1997: 8)

and almost as quickly his swerve from Freud:

My theory rejects also the qualified Freudian optimism that happy substitution is possible, that a second chance can save us from the repetitive quest for our earliest attachments. Poets as poets cannot accept substitutions, and fight to the end to have their initial chance alone. (Bloom 1997: 8) <sup>1</sup>

## Use of Irony

Rorty begins his section on irony by setting up an archetype of those who people his utopia - the "liberal ironist". He draws upon his earlier sections on language, self, and community for the description. Having stressed the importance of vocabulary throughout, he now introduces a new term, 'final vocabulary'. This term refers to that set of words which, he says, all humans carry around with them and which they use to justify their actions, their beliefs and lives:

These are the words in which we formulate praise of our friends and contempt for our enemies, our long-term projects, our deepest self-doubts and our highest hopes. They are the words in which we tell, sometimes prospectively and sometimes retrospectively, the story of our lives. (CIS: 73)

Rorty calls this "final" vocabulary:

in the sense that if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no non-circular argumentative recourse. Those words are as far as she can go with language; beyond them there is only helpless passivity or a resort to force. (CIS: 73)

Having substantiated this term and given examples, Rorty then sets out what he intends by 'ironist'. He provides a somewhat idiosyncratic, though justifiable, version of this term, in my view. An 'ironist' fulfils three conditions:

(1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she

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<sup>1</sup> The place of metaphor in Freud is material for another study, but we may briefly note here the metaphorical effects of using some of Freud's major terms. I. A. Richards described 'transference' as another word of metaphor. To sublimate is "to divert the expression of an instinctual desire or impulse from its primitive form to one that is considered more socially or culturally acceptable." (Merriam-Webster) We may hypothesize that many of Freud's terms not only map events to myths or vice versa, but provide a method of subverting the restrictions of a reified view of language. In this, he offers a limited movement in support of democracy.

does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in a touch with a power not herself. (CIS: 73)

Rorty glosses this last point as:

Ironists who are inclined to philosophise see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal metavocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one's way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing off new the against the old. (CIS: 73)

Rorty is, in his own words, describing a utopia. I hesitate. From my perspective, Rorty introduces his ironist as a kind of compromise, someone who will continue to use language as-if, for the most part at least, it may be used, as before, in an unquestioned way. I do not see it like this. Whereas, above, Rorty describes a 'final vocabulary' as "those words (which) are as far as she can go with language; beyond them there is only helpless passivity or a resort to force" I see no good purpose in drawing that line. To draw that line is to say that persons have no power of further redescription, no further ability to metaphorize. Granted that, as Rorty claims, there is no non-circular argumentative recourse, but there still remains the possibility of further metaphorical redescription. To deny this possibility, seen from my perspective, is to impose a limit upon the ironist's ability to deploy further metaphor. Worse, in the context that Rorty sets this part of his argument, that of a challenge to the ironists to justify their choice of vocabulary, Rorty seems to deny that role to metaphor suggested by Nietzsche in *Truth and Lies*, that is the conversation that first occurs under challenge (in Nietzsche's case, the challenge implied in meeting with the stranger). This seems a strange limitation to impose (especially in a utopia ?) when even in the ordinary conversation when a challenge has been offered a 'change of subject' can be seen to be metaphorical in that, at least by implication, a suggestion is made that the new topic, is 'genus' to the 'species' of the challenge. Rorty supposes that his ironists who are inclined to philosophize (he will change this, later, to 'theorize') will do so "by playing the new off against the old". This is pretty much what I suppose that the originator of a new, or relatively new, metaphor has to do.

Rorty's next move is to clarify his conception of ironist by opposing common sense to irony, and then exploring a conventional challenge to common sense. At some point in meeting the challenge, the conversation:

may go Socratic. The question "What is *x*?" is now asked in such a way that it cannot be answered simply by producing paradigm cases of *x*-hood. So one may demand a definition, an essence. (CIS: 74)

Rorty develops his clarification by remarking that:

To make such Socratic demands is not yet, of course, to become an ironist in the sense in which I am using this term. It is only to become a 'metaphysician,' in a sense of that term which I am adapting from Heidegger. (CIS: 74)

I find myself in agreement with Rorty at this point but on a different ground, for by holding metaphor at the centre, and knowing that it is metaphor which one holds at the centre, prevents any necessity of metaphysics<sup>1</sup>. In using a metaphor, one brings forward a previous experience/event / action to illumine the present, and this does not entail a metaphysics, *pace* Heidegger, it is simply to enjoy metaphor. Later, in his chapter on self-creation and affiliation, Rorty returns to this theme:

The ironist theorist distrusts the metaphysician's metaphor of a vertical view downward. He substitutes the historicist metaphor of looking back on the past along a horizontal axis. ... The topic of ironist theory is metaphysical theory.... The goal of ironist theory is to understand the metaphysical urge, the urge to theorize, so well that one becomes entirely free of it. (CIS: 96-7)

I concur with the general tenor of Rorty's remarks here, but suggest the use of different term for 'urge' here. I prefer to think that those who suffer from Rorty's 'metaphysical urge' are those who are under an illusion about language. Rorty has built a substantial part of his reputation eschewing visual metaphors wherever he can, but I suggest that 'illusion' is quite useful here. The metaphysician is common-sensical, in Rorty's sense of that phrase, and Rorty would agree here. Any impression that there is something called language which is anything other than the practices of those performing it, that it is something which progressively comes to fit the world better and better, I hold to be illusory, and try to make do without it. When pressed, I try to

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1 Peter Poellner takes issue with Rorty's "dismissal of the sceptical question". He remarks: "In Rorty's case, it is of course part of a more general rejection of metaphysics. (...) More recently, however, he has suggested that 'our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter'. It is not that metaphysical or indeed sceptical questions can be shown to be incoherent; the suggestion is rather that 'we might want to stop doing those things ( e.g. worry about the way the world actually is in itself) and do something else' - the something else consisting primarily in what he calls self-creation." Poellner comments at this point that: "There is, of course, little point in arguing with such an expression of preference. However, we may note that Rorty does not even begin to provide a plausible explanation (nor, perhaps, does he wish to) of why metaphysical questions and beliefs have been as central as they have been in Western thought at least since Plato and, arguably, in the self-understanding of Western (and not only Western) civilization more generally." (Poellner, 1994:75-6) I hope it is clear that my view is that were Rorty to have taken metaphor as a more central issue than the 'natural' use of metaphor would be a central item in meeting Poellner's request. The historical period likely to be most useful being Europe in the period of Hobbes' lifetime.

convince by introducing further metaphors, fresh redescriptions, partly in the hope that one, or more, may satisfy an enquirer, but partly in the hope of merely convincing the enquirer that metaphors bring about a difference, whether for good or ill. The metaphors will be my metaphors, the selection, merely as a selection, drawn from my history and experience, containing a pattern linked to my interests and values, demonstrating my tastes. And these, to a lesser or greater extent, made public. In so doing, I at once publish an invitation for them to be held by others as identifying me, my colours, the taste by which I am content to be judged, *for the time being and in this company*.

I emphasize the final phrases, in order to point up a difference I have with Rorty. I cannot agree with Rorty that I have only one final vocabulary, further it seems to me inconsistent with other aspects of his own position in which he holds so tightly to the public/private divide, other than for heuristic purposes, and that, in consequence, he holds only one final vocabulary. This smacks to me of a residual divination, his secular equivalent of the 'soul'. I cannot separate myself from others in such a way as to identify a single 'final vocabulary'. If I try to visualize my dying, as 'alone' as one may ever be, I am dying 'from' others, and those others are those with whom I have lived and acted and with whom my/our language has developed, including by metaphor. If I visualize those moments in my life when I have stood alone, been challenged by significant others, excluded from groups of which previously I was a welcomed member, it would be justifiable to think of my having a number of final vocabularies in Rorty's definition of that term.

## **Solidarity**

In his chapter on solidarity, Rorty writes again about final vocabularies but arrives from another direction. Continuing in his theme of keeping a separation between the public and the private in a context of democratic freedoms, he writes:

The existence of these two sides (like the fact that we may belong to several communities and thus have conflicting *moral* obligations, as well as conflicts between moral obligations and private commitments) generates dilemmas. Such dilemmas we shall always have with us, but they are never going to be resolved by appeal to some further higher set of obligations which a philosophical tribunal might discover and apply. Just as there is nothing which validates a person's or a culture's final vocabulary, there is nothing implicit in that vocabulary which dictates how to reweave it when it is put under strain. All we can do is work with the final vocabulary we have, while keeping our ears open for hints about how it might be expanded or revised.  
(CIS: 197)

Here Rorty has brought my earlier concern about his lack of interest in multiple membership of groups alongside his notion of final vocabularies, but seems to detect no tension, where I detect the inevitability of multiple final vocabularies. Perhaps I am more influenced by G. H. Mead's notion of symbolic interaction than is Rorty.<sup>1</sup>

Rorty's ironist "spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game." (CIS: 75) One might expect here to find Rorty considering the possibility of multiple tribes, multiple language games. New metaphors, in a rich Western context, may bring about fresh groupings? Such a move is not to be found. He seems to have no place for this part of the Romantic tradition. Rorty has a high regard for Bloom's perceptions, based closely upon developments in the Romantic period, but finds no place for the related ideas of Vico and Herder, who are so close to him in many respects. Rorty continues to keep private and public well apart, as he has from the opening sentences of CIS. As I make this difference with Rorty, I can recognize a rejoinder which says that the issue around which Rorty's notion of a final vocabulary turns, is that it is the vocabulary in which we 'formulate praise of our friends', that is a different term from praising our friends, a distinction made by Austin (Austin 1980).<sup>2</sup> Rorty is unobtruding a meta-vocabulary. In his examples of a final vocabulary he seems to be considering the thinking and justification that he does with himself in his most private moments. When he 'formulates' the praise of his friends it seems that he is justifying for himself his choice of these as his friends. When he does this he supposes that the language that is available to him can be cleansed of the association of those same friends. I cannot do that, neither, in my view, can Rorty do that congruently. He abandons some aspects of his contingency of language in order to do that. To attempt to shed the previous associations of

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1 Perhaps Rorty's dislike of visual metaphors, particularly of mirrors, influences his response to Cooley's imagery. (Cooley 1902)

2 Austin seems not to make explicit reference to metaphor, his references are oblique only. He focuses upon the uses of words, and distinguishes and categorizes those uses. It seems plausible to suppose that he construes metaphor as a use under the suspension of normal conditions: "The normal conditions of reference may be suspended, or no attempt made at a standard perlocutionary act, no attempt to make you do anything, as Walt Whitman does not seriously incite the eagle of liberty to soar." (p. 104) But Austin should be considered as trying to bring language under law, or a set of rules. From my perspective, it is acceptable to make such an effort, but that it will be done within a context of considering action, and its likely success, i.e. the measure to which I might be able to recruit co-workers. One might use such a description to consider the work of social theory. Which is to say that a contribution to social theory should be made in the context of considering a particular (theoretical) task. The evaluations of it should be made within that same context, not generalised to some universal.

terms in order to set them to a new task - my self-justification measured in terms of my choice of friends - is to use those terms metaphorically. As I have been claiming, Rorty seems not to be fully aware of the extent to which he relies upon metaphor.

For Rorty's ironist, sentences like "All men by nature desire to know" are "simply platitudes used to inculcate the local final vocabulary, the common sense of the West." (CIS: 76-7) This is where we began with my qualifications to Lear's view of Aristotle.

For Rorty, an ironist:

hopes that by the time she has finished using old words in new senses, not to mention introducing brand-new words, people will no longer ask questions phrased in the old words. (CIS: 78)

nor, we may suppose, will they ask questions in the pre-metaphor uses. I am not entirely comfortable with the insertion of "not to mention brand-new words" into this sentence. I can see that there will be uses in activities, like natural science, where the practice of naming in a concrete way has helped conversation, but not elsewhere. I find Aristotle's remark, referred to earlier, to be more in keeping with my own experience, i.e. "Now strange words simply puzzle us; ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of new ideas." (Aristotle 1984: 1410b9)

I can offer a further linkage that Rorty does not use. He includes among the repertoire of the ironist:

Ironists specialize in redescribing ranges of objects or events in partially neologistic jargon, in the hope of inciting people to adopt and extend that jargon. (CIS: 78)

It is the core of Cohen's 'intimacy thesis' that the other person is invited to step inside the new metaphor which seems well described by "inciting people to adopt and extend that jargon". This turned out to be one of the easier features of metaphor to spot in the field-work component of my study, indeed noticing the continuity of imagery was often a guide to identifying a previously missed example of metaphor.

Moving from 'ethnography' as a 'way of looking' to being a way of writing, and remaining aware of the linkage between language and perception, as exemplified in my use of Gadamer above (see pages 27 and 147), and also of Rorty's backing for ethnography as one of those disciplines

which specialize in thick description of the private and idiosyncratic, assigned to the job of sensitizing us to the pain of those who do not speak our language, Rorty offers the use of a familiar term in an unfamiliar context - one of his definitions of metaphor:

I have defined "dialectic" as the attempt to play off vocabularies against one another, rather than merely to infer propositions from one another, and thus the partial substitution of redescription for inference. I used Hegel's word because I think of Hegel's *Phenomenology* both as the beginning of the end of the Plato-Kant tradition and as a paradigm of the ironist's ability to exploit the possibilities of massive redescription. (CIS: 78) <sup>1</sup>

When CIS is seen in the context of his other writing, it will be seen as Rorty's 'coming-out party', his turning point to literature and to his use of the metaphor of literary criticism for social theory/philosophy. Starting with the example of the writing style of the young Hegel, Rorty goes on to discussing the 'playing-off' of one figure against another "the principal activity now covered by the term 'literary criticism'" and:

Influential critics, the sort of critics who propose new canons - people like Arnold, Pater, Leavis, Eliot, Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, Frank Kermode, Harold Bloom - are not in the business of explaining the real meaning of books, nor of evaluating something called their 'literary merit.' Rather, they spend their time placing books in the context of other books, figures in the context of other figures. (CIS: 80)

To see one book in the context of another, is a metaphorical act. It is a double move, book B is seen as an example of the genre defined by book A - as Nietzsche would say 'rendering equivalent what is not the same' and then noticing the anomalies, the distinctive differences. Exactly as with metaphor. To place one literary, or indeed any other, figure in the context of another figure, is a similar double move, and is similarly metaphorical.

The next few pages of CIS are an interesting site considered from the point of view of my project. It is the section in which Rorty struggles to describe effectively to his reader why and how his view might be understood from within a previous view of language; how to appropriate this stronger value of metaphor. It cannot be argued for inferentially, nor can it be argued for inferentially by arguing that it cannot be argued for inferentially. Yet from time to time Rorty drops into an earlier vocabulary, "I can explain what I mean...." (e.g. CIS: 10) when what he does is offer a new picture in contrast to an old one. Rorty's method, quite properly, is to offer

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1 It is perhaps a minor irony that Rorty effects a massive redescription of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* by redescribing it in a single sentence: "What Hegel describes as the process of spirit gradually becoming self conscious of its intrinsic nature is better described as the process of European linguistic practices changing at a faster and faster rate." (CIS: 7)



analogies - but even this process has weaknesses, it would seem, for he offers analogies which he immediately qualifies. Such qualification seems to have the effect of diminishing the Nietzsche/Cohen view of the intimacy aspects of metaphor<sup>1</sup>. Rorty has presented his ideas through a structure: his main concept is contingency (and a use of that term not conceded as proper by all) and its division / elaboration into sections of language, of selfhood and of community. The division appears as a strained one if we notice the interaction of these topics within each section. But this we should expect, given that the view Rorty has of language is one which undermines its status in the eyes of many, by seeing it as noises and marks which may be used as tools, rather than as a medium for 'getting to the truth of things'. But even as I write, I recognize that even that distinction isn't convincing. Isn't "a medium for getting at the truth of things" a description of language as a tool? Rorty engages that question in at least three different ways. First, by speaking of the multiplicity of tools and their "efficient use" and the notion of "alternative" tools - he avoids the idea of 'right' tools. Second, by contrasting the idea of alternative tools with the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. The third method he uses comes only after he has re-affirmed his analogy but with a slight shift in emphasis: "The proper (sic!) analogy is with the invention of new tools *to take the place of old tools*" (*emphasis added*) (CIS: 12). Rorty is perhaps the victim of an under-critical editor here, "proper", on a further reading would surely have been replaced. However that may be, the phrase "to take the place of the old tools" may not be so easily overlooked. A teleology, which elsewhere he will want us to drop, is allowed a foothold, and will require subsequent modification - his immediate examples only exhibit his ability to continue digging.

It is in the next paragraph that he begins to modify the previous assertions:

This Wittgensteinian analogy between vocabularies and tools has one obvious drawback. The craftsman typically knows what job he wants to do before picking or inventing tools with which to do it. By contrast, someone like Galileo, Yeats, or Hegel ... is typically unable to make clear exactly what it is that he wants to do before developing the language in which he succeeds in doing it. (CIS: 12-3)

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1 I should concede here that some of this might be simply an artefact of writing as opposed to conversation.

This latter sentence reads somewhat oddly or, perhaps better, allows the creative process to drop out of focus, and leaves the appropriate reader reminded of Thurber's cartoon<sup>1</sup>. Rorty continues:

His new vocabulary makes possible, for the first time, a formulation of its own purpose. It is a tool for doing something which could not have been envisaged prior to the development of a particular set of descriptions, those which it itself helps to provide. (CIS: 13)

Pausing only to offer a justification of his previous use of the contrast between jig-saw puzzles and the use of vocabularies as tools, by using the contrast to provide an analogy for Nietzsche's "slightly misleading terms", the will to truth and the will to self-overcoming, Rorty moves on to put Davidson to use to explicate Wittgenstein's treatment of vocabularies as tools. He moves too fast again, for my liking, but I have to admit, for my own rhetorical purposes, that my omission from the extract above is possibly unfair to Rorty. The omission qualified Hegel as:

a "poet" in my sense of the term - the sense of "one who makes things new" (CIS: 12-3)

This qualification is, in effect, Rorty's offering of a solution to his puzzle. It is, for Rorty, the archetypal action of a poet to be able to invent a use of words to do something which he could not have done before, because the lack of the vocabulary would not have permitted it. The failing systems analyst introduces a 'black box' into his system in order to elucidate the system. Rorty introduces a poet, but without telling us how the poet accomplishes his task. But, again, fairness to Rorty requires an acknowledgment that a description of the work of the poet is distributed throughout CIS, though whether these distributed descriptions are sufficiently persuasive will remain problematic.

Gadamer, also, has treated the issue of words as tools:

Thus the question that concerns us is *the conceptual character* of all understanding. This only appears to be a *secondary question*. We have seen that the *conceptual interpretation* is the realization of the hermeneutical experience itself. That is why our problem is so difficult. (...) But there is the further point that the situation has been confused by incorrect *theories of language*. It is obvious that an instrumentalist theory of signs which sees words and concepts as handy tools has missed the point of the hermeneutical phenomenon. (Gadamer 1965: 403)

Gadamer goes on to advert to Nietzsche's account of the 'forgetting' of metaphor in the formation of concepts and then continues:

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1 A middle-aged, dinner-jacketed reveller, somewhat the worse for drink and carrying, among other things, a rabbit by the ears, says to his wife, who has just opened the front door to let him in: "Darling, I seem to have this rabbit." (Thurber, 1945: 145)

This does not mean that the interpreter is using new or unusual words. But the capacity to use familiar words is not based on an act of logical subsumption, through which a particular is placed under a universal concept. Let us remember, rather, that understanding always includes an element of application and thus produces an ongoing process of concept formation. (Gadamer 1965: 403)

Here Gadamer loosens the connection between language and the world, denies even an analogical relation, and reminds us of the practical judgement required. He continues:

We must consider this now if we want to liberate the verbal nature of understanding from the presuppositions of philosophy of language. The interpreter does not use words and concepts like a craftsman who picks up his tools and then puts them away. (Gadamer 1965: 403)

There are then some disanalogies between words and tools, and one of them is that words do not remain unchanged overnight as do the craftsman's tools! We live on the rapids. Gadamer's own metaphor for the possibility of understanding is that of horizons of expectation, which horizons may well be understood, with or without Cohen's additions, as constructed by metaphor.

Analogies, other than that of the poet are possible. Rorty shuns visual images, analogies and metaphors on every possible occasion, but it may be that an analogy with the visual arts could be helpful here to try to stand closer to the creative process. Gombrich has provided an aphorism, which he has explicated at length, notably in *Art and Illusion*, (Gombrich 1960) of "make and match". The significance of this aphorism is that it offers a further re-description of the visual artist's processes. It is a view which helps us not fall so easily into what we might call Rorty's Gap - that space which is left between finding a vocabulary and doing something with it, something which wasn't previously imaginable. Gombrich's view is one which sees the creative process as an interaction between the artist, her precursors, her imagination and an artifact - perhaps it is possible to understand Davidson's view of conversation in much the same way.

### **Metaphor and action**

I want to try to relate metaphor and action more closely. At present we are inclined to think that language is a third thing, sited between ourselves and the world - some would think of metaphor as yet a fourth. Rorty makes use of Davidson's article *A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs* to do something similar, in that he wants to suggest to Davidson that he, Davidson, should see himself as pragmatist. Rorty describes Davidson's notion of a "passing theory" as follows:

...imagine that I am forming such a theory about the current behaviour of a native of an exotic culture into which I have unexpectedly parachuted. This strange person, who presumably finds me equally strange, will simultaneously be forming a theory about my behaviour. If we ever succeed in communicating easily and happily, it will be because her guesses about what I am going to do next, including what noises I am going to make next, and my own expectations about what I shall do or say under certain circumstances, come more or less to coincide, and because the converse is also true. She and I are coping with each other as we might cope with mangoes or boa constrictors - we are trying not to be taken by surprise. To say that we come to speak the same language is to say, as Davidson puts it, that "we tend to converge on passing theories." Davidson's point is that all "two people need, if they are to understand one another through speech, is the ability to converge on passing theories from utterance to utterance."  
(CIS: 14)

Davidson's own conclusion was:

I conclude that there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language users acquire and then apply to cases. And we should try again to say how convention in any important sense is involved in language; or, as I think, we should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions. (Davidson 1984: 446)

Rorty sees this conclusion as analogous to the work of Ryle and Dennett, and draws his conclusion that to think of terms like 'mind' or 'language', respectively, is simply to signal that a change of vocabulary would be helpful in what we do next. This softens Davidson's point somewhat, and introduces Rorty's criterion of usefulness just a little too quickly. Rorty is stronger, in my view, when he reinterprets Davidson in a more Davidsonian way:

This Wittgensteinian attitude ... naturalizes mind and language by making all questions about the relation of either to the rest of the universe *causal* questions, as opposed to questions about adequacy of representation or expression. (CIS: 15)

Although, as I believe, Rorty does not make the point in this way, we might notice that one consequence of regarding language as causal, is to establish a closer relation between metaphor and action. Rorty prefers to make the point that:

It makes perfectly good sense to ask how we got from the relative mindlessness of the monkey to the full-fledged mindedness of the human, or from speaking Neanderthal to speaking postmodern, if these are construed as straightforward causal questions. In the former case the answer takes us off into neurology and thence into evolutionary biology. But in the latter case it takes us into intellectual history viewed as the history of metaphor. (CIS: 15-6)

Again Rorty manages to conceal some circularity. Should he so easily accept the authority of natural sciences when, as he knows, he will be suggesting that their authority should be seen as a pragmatic one?

A nonteleological view of intellectual history, including the history of science, does for the theory of culture what the Mendelian, mechanistic account of natural selection did for evolutionary theory. (CIS: 16)

Rorty's form of (implied) argument, as seen here, is based upon quite complex analogies, perhaps better understood as metaphor. In this extract the argument is of the form A:B as C:D. Or, see the relationship of CD as if it were parallel to the relation of AB. Or, CD is an example of AB, by which time the metaphor is emerging more clearly. Rorty then supplies his linking idea:

Mendel let us see mind as something which just happened rather than as something which was the point of the whole process. (CIS: 16)

He provides us with something like the metaphor:

This analogy lets us think of "our language" - that is, of the science and culture of twentieth-century Europe - as something that took shape as a result of a great number of sheer contingencies. (CIS: 16)

Two points on this: first, that this is going to emerge as "determinism qualified by contingency" a teasing paradox. Second, not contingency, because of choice and Nietzsche.

Our language and our culture are as much a contingency, as much a result of thousands of small mutations finding niches (and millions of others finding no niches), as are the orchids and the anthropoids. (CIS: 16)

Davidson lets us think of the history of language, and thus of culture, as Darwin taught us to think of the history of a coral reef. Old metaphors are constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors. (CIS: 16)

And, we might add, Rorty helps us to see an extension / combination of Nietzsche and

Davidson. This is a minor example of that quality of figurative language which Fogelin puts as:

The *intellectual* and *aesthetic* force of figurative language is derived from the opportunity it provides for unlimited elaboration and sophistication. Depending upon the powers of those who use it, figurative language opens a range of possibilities from banality to genius. (Fogelin 1988: 112-3)

Ted Cohen's version is:

Thus I think of metaphor as the language's intrinsic capacity to surpass its own (putative) limits. (Cohen 1981: 184)

Back to Rorty:

To accept this analogy, we must follow Mary Hesse in thinking of scientific revolutions as metaphoric redescriptions of nature rather than insights into the intrinsic nature of nature. (CIS: 16)

This form of argument does, though, meet Rorty's own criteria of redescribing more and more in terms of the new idea. Here it seems that the underlying ideas are the linked ones of language as not a medium, and of metaphor as causal, together with his use of 'contingency'.

One aspect is hidden in empirical accounts of the use of 'contingent' and its cognates. It is that 'contingent' is also contingent, but that it is not wholly so, and therefore stands in need of some qualification. We might say, if we were to raise our skills with noises and marks to its (normally) reified status, that the contingency of language is limited directly by those abilities with noises and marks. It is limited by the sheer unavoidability of the linkages, or, to get a little closer to verbs than to nouns, by the linking processes which happen, seemingly unavoidably, by those involved (and of which Gadamer wrote, above). This ability to make such linkages is perhaps best described, for my purposes, as the key human ability. It is, as Nietzsche has it when speaking of the drive toward the formation of metaphors:

the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself.' (Nietzsche 1968: 88)

So, whatever else might be said about Rorty's use of 'contingency' in relation to language, we can also say that it is already significantly qualified by the notion of metaphor. We might almost say that without the qualifying power of metaphor, contingency might be of no use at all to a theorist. Rorty writes, in effect, not of 'contingency, irony and solidarity' but of 'contingency-qualified-by-metaphor, irony and solidarity'. This modification immediately suggests questions about possible interconnectedness with the other two terms. Following Vico and Kenneth Burke, we understand irony and metaphor already to be significantly related. Following Nietzsche, we already understand a significant relation between metaphor and solidarity, though, in the absence of any mention by Rorty of the context of the passage "What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations...." we cannot be confident that he sees so strong a link between solidarity and metaphor as does Nietzsche.

On such a list of usages of 'contingency', as that offered above, it is immediately clear that it is a very convenient one for those who wish to support a pragmatist viewpoint. It offers an alternative set of possibilities, certainly an alternative mood, to those emphasised by varieties of

existentialism. Authenticity becomes contingent upon metaphor. One consequence of seeing this connection is to see Heidegger as simply legislating for the use of language when he tries to escape from Nietzsche, by defining Nietzsche as metaphysician, in wanting to place metaphor within metaphysics. Trying to see metaphor as central, trying to keep, with Nietzsche, the drive to metaphor as central, it is the process of exploring the consequences of each example generated, seen here as part of that drive, which leads one to consider one's own previously unconsidered possibilities. Or to question one's previously unquestioned assumptions, which in some cases leads one to ask questions properly thought of as metaphysical. One is thereby encouraged to follow Rorty's injunction to abandon metaphysics, but not for Rorty's reasons, but simply because the metaphysical is subsumed, within my view, as part of the normal drive to metaphor. From the viewpoint of this thesis, Heidegger has it the wrong way round.

### **Metaphor and Social Science**

I think I can further illustrate my qualifications to CIS, by considering some of the comments made by Peter Wagner who, faced by the ambiguity of Rorty's project as expressed in CIS, chose to regard it as "the search for a liberal utopia" (Wagner 1994: 153). Writing of the chapter on the contingency of selfhood, Wagner wrote:

Rorty's lecture on this issue is basically a praise of the strong poet, based on a Nietzschean-Freudian notion of self-creation which sees 'every human being as a consciously or unconsciously acting out an idiosyncratic fantasy' (CIS p. 36). From this stand-point, he seems to deplore that there can be no lives 'which are pure action rather than re-action' (CIS p. 42), because they have to deal with others, with matter, with historically set stages.

Here the weakness of his entire approach becomes visible, it resides less in the insistence on contingencies in the philosophical debate on foundations than it does in the unwillingness to accept that there is a structured social and natural world of and around human beings and that this is the terrain, the only terrain, on which they may recreate themselves. In this sense there is no 'pure action' at all, but only re-action, but re-acting is then exactly the mode, the only available mode, for human self-creation. (Wagner 1994: 152-3)

From my perspective, part of what divides Rorty and Wagner here is the restricted deployment of metaphor in Rorty's account of his liberal-utopia. My allegation is, that if Rorty had included a thorough account of quotidian metaphor he would have begun to describe "a sociohistorical account of the condition of contingency", called for by Wagner. It is somewhat ironic that Rorty,

who has provided the most sustained attempt to describe a place for metaphor, should be seen as still too restricted in its deployment, thereby providing what could be seen as yet another example of resistance to metaphor. Whether or not Wagner is justified in concluding that Rorty “seems to deplore that there can be no lives ‘which are pure action rather than re-action’” (*my emphasis*) is less important a point than his fully justifiable observation that:

(Rorty’s) unwillingness to accept that there is a structured social and natural world of and around human beings and that this is the terrain, the only terrain<sup>1</sup>, on which they may recreate themselves. (Wagner 1994: 153)

Bending this comment to my purposes, I see Wagner not only as justifying his earlier comment that “the strong turn Rorty proposes already indicates a main feature of his thinking, namely an underconceptualization<sup>2</sup> in sociological terms”, but as also reminding us that metaphor requires a known ‘vehicle’ (in I. A. Richards’ use of that term). Wagner’s conclusion to this part of his argument is:

In this sense there is no ‘pure action’ at all, but only re-action, but re-acting is then exactly the mode, the only available mode, for human self-creation. (Wagner 1994: 153)

Wagner might well have added that this holds for the present, and would hold in the utopia which Rorty is attempting to describe, and all the way along the road between the two. It is inescapable. But it leaves something unsaid when seen from my perspective. Wagner is about to make off with Rorty’s triple contingencies in his toolbox, but those contingencies all carry within them a strong component of metaphor. So, from my perspective, I ask: Does Wagner’s writing make allowance for this? Let us consider the extract above. The core (read ‘essence’ if Rorty isn’t in the room) of Wagner’s sentence is ‘re-acting is the only available mode for human self-creation’. Insofar as “re-acting” is intended to contrast with ‘pure action’, and I take it to be entirely that - that was how Rorty used the terms originally, and how Wagner uses them in his turn - I concur completely AND (i.e., not ‘but’!) I want to add a qualification. The term ‘re-acting’,

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1 Vico would be amused to learn of the growing use of naturalist metaphors in the vocabulary of social thought. However, I prefer the phrase “learning to live on the rapids”, which I believe I owe to John H. T. Robinson, but have not identified the source, and even Neurath’s image of having to repair one’s boat at sea. (Cited by Blumenberg (1997:76).

2 Whilst, from my point of view, the use of ‘under-conceptualization’ seems an inappropriate term when trying to introduce a story with a lead character of metaphor, I am not able to offer any other which is likely to be acceptable to Wagner’s readers, nor to mine. A ‘lacuna’ or even a ‘missing character’ in the myth being told, stands little chance of surviving, though Mali might press something of that kind. (Mali 1992)



and its relations 'reaction' etc. are, as yet, not entirely dead metaphors. In consequence they have the ability to deceive, or to render ambiguous. A brief empirical investigation: Merriam-Webster gives the following for 'react', which I have labelled, and re-ordered, for convenience:

- (a) to undergo chemical reaction
- (b) to respond to a stimulus
- (c) to move or tend in a reverse direction
- (d) to exert a reciprocal or counteracting force or influence
- (e) to act in opposition to a force or influence.

These are identifiably different uses. We may dispense with (a): neither Rorty nor Wagner are talking about chemical reactions, even metaphorically. We may also dispense with (b): although once powerful, explanations by recourse to a stimulus/response vocabulary not only no longer convince, but both writers reject such explanations. The next (c) can also go on the grounds that both writers wish that this possibility may be overcome. I suppose that both Rorty and Wagner would allow versions of the remaining expressions to be associated with their uses of "re-act", a decision which would rest largely upon the associations that they make with each, though they might add further qualifications<sup>1</sup>. I further imagine that neither writer would accept that any of these phrases or clauses adequately expresses what they intended: Rorty, in that he is explicit about it, and Wagner by virtue of his other writing on selfhood elsewhere in *Liberty & Discipline*. In my perception, metaphor offers a mode of self-creation in addition to that of re-acting, if indeed anything *new* could be imagined from the descriptions of "re-acting" as found in Merriam-Webster. I see a connection between re-acting and Wittgenstein's cry: Back to the firm ground! Bi-pedal walking might be described by some as a continuously controlled fall but, however skilfully done, a change of direction requires some firm ground to tread. In my terms, the vehicle for re-act must be better articulated, shared, agreed.

Rorty might very well reply that, far from a restricted deployment of metaphor, he has used Davidson to problematize the normal understanding of language to the extent that the usual boundary between the literal and the metaphorical has been removed, that language is, in Shelley's phrase, "vitally metaphorical", and that even if he, Rorty, did use the phrase "pure

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1 Conversation, rather than published discourse, offers a quicker route to solve issues of this kind.

action" it was intended only as a contrast to "re-action". Were Rorty to reply in this way, it would be subject to the observation that his chosen key term in CIS is "contingency", which is a useful term in that it carries with it not only the notion of 'chance', but also that of its Latin root "com-tangere" indicating 'touch'. Language is helpfully understood as contingent, as 'touching' something, for without the touching there would only be sound. Language is contingent in that the sounds 'touch' something - that is what makes sounds into words, they also 'touch' each other and that is what makes words into language. But, there remains a gap between this view of language and the emergence of 'dominant metaphors'. Rorty has no explicit account of how a metaphor comes to dominate. He is less than explicit in how it comes to be seen that it is indeed a metaphor which has come dominate. His usual test, that of pragmatism, identifies no metaphors, rather, if anything it tends to obfuscate by paying attention to the actions rather than to the related linguistic expressions. My perspective inserts quotidian metaphor use, which provides the context for particular metaphors to emerge as influential.

Earlier, I asked whether Peter Wagner's writing makes allowance for a strong(ish) view of metaphor to attach to the contingencies of language and self. As on other occasions, I will only answer insofar as the uses may be described. Wagner writes:

By appropriating this part of Rorty's philosophising, I am trying to achieve two things. With him and against modernist social science, I argue for accepting the contingency of all social phenomena as the *a priori* assumptions for social research, and more specifically the contingency of community and selfhood as assumptions for a current study of the condition of modernity. The latter is especially needed now, since this is a historical period in which relatively well-established *social* foundations of both community and self have begun to shake again more strongly. In this sense, we live indeed in a postmodern condition. (Wagner 1994: 153)

Wagner names two of the "triple contingences" and leaves that of language unemphasized.

Should we suppose that we detect some reluctance over metaphor as well? He continues:

But against Rorty, and in the continuity of a project which maintains the possibility of a social science, I argue for analysing the specific shapes that community and selfhood do actually take and may possibly take under present conditions. (Wagner 1994: 153)

Wagner's difference with Rorty, stated so bluntly, helped me to see another respect in which Rorty restricts his use of metaphor. Metaphors which are going to be effective in their "nudging" would do well to link to a recognisable description of their subject term, and Wagner's project of "maintain(ing) the possibility of a social science" offers exactly that. That said, however, it would

follow from within my perspective, that any social scientific formulation should be taken to be what we might term as “contingency aware”.<sup>1</sup>

Given that this is what Wagner intends by his qualified endorsement of Bhaskar, an interim conclusion might be that Wagner is well able to take with him Rorty’s (restricted ?) use of metaphor, and is in a position to give a fuller account of how metaphor and social science relate. Keeping metaphor at the centre entails keeping it at the centre for all. Part of my dissatisfaction with the ‘history of metaphor’ approach of CIS is that, like the history of the school books, it focuses only upon the history of the victors’ metaphors, so to speak. The ordinary everyday actions of those who find themselves in unfamiliar situations is just as open to the possibility of metaphor or hypothesis generation and testing as any other.

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1 I believe that I am trespassing on Bhaskar’s territory here. I am by no means sure that I have understood Bhaskar’s criticism of Rorty, but we both seem to want to use a similar form of words to describe our perception of Rorty’s writing. Bhaskar writes: “Rorty remains, I am going to contend, a prisoner of the implicit ontology of the problematic he describes. My aim is to carry the dialectic of ‘de-divinisation’ a stage or two further by conceiving reality, being, the world (precisely as it is known to us in science) as only contingently related to human being; and therefore as not essentially characterizable as either empirical or rational or in terms of any other human attribute, This is the mistake of what I call the ‘epistemic fallacy’: the definition of being in terms of knowledge cf. (Bhaskar 1978: 36ff.). It is the picture of ourselves or our insignia in any picture - the picture as invariably containing our mirror image or mark.” (Bhaskar, 1989: 147) I think that this formulation does for Bhaskar what my belief in the part that language plays in seeing, does for me. I think I prefer to speak of a ‘contingency aware’ social science, rather than speak of reality being contingently related to human being. If pressed, I would say that I simply feel more comfortable with a form of words which tends to focus attention on the ‘knowledge-generating’ processes involved, that is to say I prefer to speak of action rather than ontology.

## ***Part Two:***

### **Writing and Inviting**

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## Chapter 8

### **Metaphor: an enigma in ethnography**

In Rorty's own summary of how solidarity is created, he says that it is not by enquiry, but by imagination, by the ability to see strangers as fellow sufferers.

Victims of cruelty, people who are suffering do not have much in the way of language. That is why there is no such thing as the voice of the oppressed" or the "language of the victims." The language the victims once used is not working any more, and they are suffering too much to put new words together. So the job of putting their situation into language is going to have to be done for them by somebody else. The liberal novelist, poet, or journalist is good at that. The liberal theorist usually is not. (CIS: 94)

Later, Rorty slightly enlarges this by setting up a contrast between a liberal metaphysical culture, in which theology, science and philosophy are expected to bind human beings together, and an ironist one:

Within an ironist culture, by contrast, it is the disciplines which specialize in thick description of the private and idiosyncratic which are assigned this job. In particular, novels and ethnographies which sensitize one to the pain of those who do not speak our language must do the job which demonstrations of a common human nature were supposed to do. Solidarity has to be constructed out of little pieces, rather than found already waiting ... (CIS: 94)

I do not, as I think Rorty does, relegate the inquiry, rather than the imagination, to the ethnographer. Rorty has a high opinion of the poet and the novelist and also of the ethnographer, but he seems not to suppose that this last is equally capable of the imagination which he elsewhere attributes to the strong poet.

When I began this study I set it up in two parts: the one was an exploration of what I then referred to as social theory - and which I now prefer to think of as social thought; the other was something akin to an ethnographic study of aspects of a school, a study I continued, part-time, for some two years. That study combined the substantive practice of the ethnography in the

school, plus the investigation of the procedures of ethnography and its related culture. My reasons at the time were to try to provide myself some kind of ground, a particular place, inhabited by particular people doing a recognizable job with other people, a social site in which, and against which, I could try to picture what I imagined would be a constantly changing 'take' on metaphor. The challenge would be a wide one and would include, not only the practical issues of distinguishing the dead and the dying, the forgotten, the half-forgotten and the remembered among the terms, metaphors or concepts, but would also challenge the implications for me, the would-be writer. How would I choose to write of the school and its teachers? What would my writing imply for how I saw myself? For who, and whom(?), I was choosing to be as I was?

In this chapter I will report upon that study, albeit very briefly, but only as illustrating what I have come to see as the ambivalence, or equivocation, of writers as to the place of explicit metaphor in ethnographic studies. I will then further illustrate this, in one case from a recipe book, in another from a report on a doctoral supervision in qualitative field work and, finally, from a discussion of meta-ethnography.

## **Outline of the school study**

The school chosen was a large (700+ pupils) inner-city junior school. Large, in order to have a staff which would already have formed differing groups for a variety of reasons, and to have both formal and informal statuses, and a variety of organizational and social roles - I was already familiar with some of the earlier work of Morgan on organizations<sup>1</sup>, work which had explicitly recognized metaphor. Junior school, because I had a reputation as having experience as a trainer in secondary schools and wanted to distance myself from that. The contract with the school revealed both my link with Warwick University, and with this thesis. The school, staff and managers, agreed that the research may be carried out without the school knowing the detail of my interest, but that this would be revealed at the end of an 18-month period. In addition, six of the staff volunteered to give three, hour and a half, interviews in each of three terms. They also

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1 Morgan began a conversation in the pages of *Administrative Science Quarterly* with a provocative article: *Paradigms, metaphors, and puzzle solving in organizational theory* (Morgan, 1980: 605-622) The reply came from Pinder & Bourgeois in 1982 (Pinder 1982). There was a further exchange in ASQ (28)

agreed to write-up a school-based incident of their choice on not more than two sides of A4, as an item for case-study purposes - I had in mind a training session as a research occasion. I was given access to the common rooms of the school, the six teachers' classrooms, also to the headteacher's room except for those occasions when a staff-disciplinary matter was being discussed. I was also given first use of a small room equipped with desk, bookshelves, a variety of chairs and power points. Staff meetings and senior team meetings were similarly open. During the course of the study the school came under inspection by Ofsted and I was invited to all related meetings with the exception of the Ofsted inspector's own team meetings. I also had the opportunity to interview the inspector before the verbal report to the senior management team, which occasion I also attended. All extended interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, other recordings varied as to opportunity, tape-recording where possible, written notes at the time and immediately after periods of observation.

### **Reflections on the study in school**

I was surprised at how difficult it was to decide what might count as a metaphor. I had already realised that the work of Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), and their associates, would not be helpful in this. Their concern, which seemed to be to map all possible everyday metaphor in order to convince readers of the metaphorical basis of natural language, did not lend itself to the identification of what I came to call 'local', and in some cases 'new local', metaphor<sup>1</sup>. I was looking to find examples of metaphor which might meet that experience of metaphor of which Cohen had spoken. It seems to be one thing to recognize a 'new local' metaphor when it occurs in one's own life-world, but quite another to recognize it as the observer elsewhere. I did recognize some metaphors at the time they were uttered, but on some occasions did not. Neither did I when listening to the tapes, nor when transcribing them, and in some cases not until I began the coding processes. I may offer an example of this. It was also an occasion of some learning for me.

One teacher, during an interview which I privately understood as being about the teacher's own perception of (their) identity - I was following Rorty's three-fold contingencies as a crude

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1 Later, I recognized that Lodge also makes reference to 'local' metaphor, but without comment: perhaps there is a need for this locution.

division of area of inquiry - described a moment earlier in (their) life when (they) decided upon a change of career - I was surprised at the proportion of teachers I met at the school for whom teaching was not a first choice - said:

...I felt I had to do something better than extra-long-distance lorry-driving. (Interview 1: 23/4/98)

This I missed as an example of a metaphor at the time of the interview. My own notes on this incident read:

I remember this moment in the interview very well - I remember smiling at the description and feeling warm to this man who could describe his view of himself in this way. But I did not, there and then, identify it as a metaphor. Nor did I when I came to transcribe it. I identified it as a metaphor sitting on the train coming to the University yesterday, what disappoints me is that I cannot now recall the line of thought that led to it. (Memo dated 29/10/98)

I came to understand it as a metaphor because the previous text in the transcription reads as:

I came into teaching having been in the merchant navy and trained as a navigator and having chosen to come into education anyway and having sailed in South America and the Caribbean and the West Indies and seen - we have discussions as to what poverty is in this country - and having seen things there which I just couldn't cope with as a seventeen year-old - it triggered off in me, ..." (Interview 1: 23/4/98)

At the time, I also made another memo to myself:

This is an example, if one is needed, to show that an entire utterance is the minimum unit to consider for locating metaphor. (Memo dated 29/10/98)

It will be noticed that, in the first extract from my memos above, I make mention of smiling and feeling warm towards my subject - features of metaphor which I had already expected to experience by virtue of Ted Cohen's observations, but that I had not explicitly recognized that smiling and laughter could stand as an alert to a possible metaphor - a matter which I came to realise later.

The occasion of this realisation came during the final staff-meeting, before school opened, on the first day of the Ofsted inspection. The headteacher, having been reminded of the time, said:

I feel like a footballer manager, we've been into the tactics, we've done our preparation and trained well - go out there and give them a hundred and ten percent!

A voice from the back of the meeting cried out:

We're oop for t'cup!... (laughter all round, staff begin to get up and move away)

There are several points here. It was many months into the observations and recordings, before I came to recognize laughter as an alert to the occasion of a new local metaphor. Grammarians



would insist that the head's remark wasn't an example of metaphor but was rather a simile - nevertheless the response to it was unmistakeable - and Aristotle would have been sympathetic. The cry from the back of the room was the repetition of a form of words which was originally sited in the relations between the north and south of UK from an earlier period - relations which were not unambiguous - perhaps catching some of the feelings of the teachers in relation to former fellow-teachers turned inspectors. It was also an example of a speaker's metaphor being entered and developed by the hearer.

Analogies and metaphors also come juxtaposed, if not mixed. The deputy head teacher, asked why s/he was not already a headteacher, replied:

I need to learn more, others of my friends became heads too early and regretted it. I'm learning here from (Headteacher). I'm learning here *with* (Headteacher). I've passed the compulsory part of the NPQH<sup>1</sup>. I'm learning a lot, it's growing inside me like a flower, I'm adding to it bit by bit, building a wall...

I took this juxtaposition as an example of the complexity of the Deputy's self-view, given the recent introduction of specific training requirements for headship.

Another memo reminds me that, in spite of my awareness of Lodge's proposal that writing may be divided between the metaphoric and the metonymic, I did not use this distinction in the coding of the created texts. I knew of it, I was excited by it and, when the opportunity came to put it to use, I ignored it.

As I report these items in this context, I feel them to be of little significance when compared, for example, to the metaphors with which Rorty deals, metaphors which held a community captive for tens, sometimes hundreds of years. And yet, it still seems to me that it is on these quotidian metaphors, and the processes which support them, that the larger ones depend.

## **Ethnography: metaphor in a recipe book**

I have chosen to illustrate my contention as to the ambivalence to metaphor in the introductory recipe books in ethnography, by reference to the 2nd edition of Miles & Huberman's *Qualitative data analysis: an expanded sourcebook* (Miles and Huberman 1994)<sup>2</sup>. It is of advantage that they do

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1 NPQH = National Professional Qualification for Headship.

2 The first edition was originally published in 1984. The second edition incorporates material generated by a research exercise in which current researchers were invited to offer "collegial advice and

explicitly consider metaphor. They start from a view of metaphor as a partial abstraction. They cite Morgan:

calling a boxer "a tiger in the ring" a metaphor which evokes fierceness, grace, and power - and ignores striped fur, fangs, and four-leggedness. Metaphors are thus a "partial abstraction" (Morgan 1980: 250).

Max Black called this "focusing" (Black 1962). Miles and Huberman go on to focus on the use of metaphor which has 'an immense and central place in the development of theory'. It is perhaps my main point in this section, to draw attention to the use of metaphor by ethnographers in the formation and elaboration of their theorizing, but their apparent unwillingness to allow for the possibility that their subjects are also so using metaphor. This lack of symmetry, what I have above described as a form of resistance to metaphor should, in my view and in spite of my difficulties with it, be resisted.

Miles and Huberman refer to Lakoff (Lakoff 1987), who argues that people can only grasp abstract ideas by mapping them on to more concrete ones. They also refer to Gertner and Grudin "who have displayed psychological theory as evolving over nine decades from using animistic to system-like metaphors (Gertner and Grudin 1985)". They also draw attention to A. Miller (Miller 1986) "pointing to the centrality of metaphor in the physical sciences in clarifying arguments and explaining puzzles ", and to Geertz (Geertz 1983), who: "comments that metaphors used to explain society (which he calls the "instruments of reasoning") have shifted from "elaborate mechanisms or quasi-organisms" to those based on "serious games or sidewalk dramas."

What else is true of metaphors? They are *data-reducing devices*, taking several particulars and making a single generality of them... (they) are also *pattern-making devices* - for ourselves and for the people we study...are also excellent *decentering devices*. You step back from the welter of observations and conversations at the field site and say, What's going on here? Because metaphors will not let you simply describe or denote a phenomenon, you have to move up a notch to a more inferential or analytical level. (Miles and Huberman 1994: 250-1)

Miles and Huberman introduce metaphor in their chapter entitled: '*Making Good Sense: Drawing and Verifying Conclusions*'. They describe it as "a big chapter, at the core of the book". From my perspective there is much ambivalence and ambiguity in what they write. Not that this is, by

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examples of their work". The editors write: "Our warm thanks to the 126 researchers who responded; they provided a wide range of ideas, papers, advice, and cautions that were immensely helpful". I offer this simply as evidence of some collegiality to justify my choice of text for consideration.

itself, something to regret, for recognized as such, both can be useful on the route to decision-taking.

People are meaning-finders; they can very quickly make sense of the most chaotic events. Our equilibrium depends on such skills: We keep the world consistent and predictable by organizing and interpreting it. The critical question is whether the meanings you find in qualitative data are valid, repeatable and right. The following section discusses tactics for testing or confirming meanings, avoiding bias, and assuring the quality of conclusions. (Miles and Huberman 1994: 245)

There is some tension here, in the insistence that people are meaning finders, rather than meaning makers. Wishing, presumably, to avoid the accusation from other areas of sociology that ethnographers report on what they imagine, rather than upon what they find, the process of hypothesis generation and testing is allowed to drop seriously out of focus. Whereas many have found it useful to suppose that even simple seeing is best represented by such a description (Gregory 1974).

Miles and Huberman quite explicitly recognize the issue which I take to be important:

The people we study use metaphors constantly as a way of making sense of their experience. We do the same thing as we examine our data. The issue, perhaps, is not *whether* to use metaphor as an analysis tactic, but to be *aware* of how we – and the people we study – use it. (Miles and Huberman 1994: 250)

I applaud the two outer sentences, and feel some foreboding at the second. The first sentence, in that it makes the obvious empirical point. The third, as it represents well what we might call the weak thesis. A call for awareness seems not to be asking too much. The second sentence signals what will happen next:

For instance, suppose you found yourself referring to "the empty nest" when you were looking at an interview with someone who has grown children. You are, in effect, making allusions to an important environmental setting ("nest"), the idea of nurturance aching for a newly absent (but grown up) object, and the acknowledgement that nurturance to the point of nest-leaving has taken a good deal of time. But you may also be assuming that the nest itself is of little value and will be abandoned – and not considering the idea that the nest may be filled with a new brood.

So the *richness and complexity* of metaphors are useful. The "empty nest" metaphor leads us farther than a single variable, such as "mother's separation anxiety," would. Our metaphor lets us see new theoretical possibilities (maybe if socialization is weak, the child will regress). (Miles and Huberman 1994: 250)

Miles and Huberman here give a good example, in my view, of how one's imagination may be stimulated by the use of metaphor, in the effort to understand a social situation, and in the

process they have turned away from subject's own metaphor and returned to the researcher's interest. The subject of metaphor as a legitimate matter of substantive research interest is lost - at the very single point of mention. A more cynical critic might point to this as an example of social researchers failing to match up to the abilities of their subjects.

### **Substitutes rule, O.K.?**

According to my copy of *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (QASS) (Strauss 1987), it was reprinted in 1988, 1989, 1990 (twice), 1991, 1993 (twice), 1994. i.e., annually since publication, this I take to be some kind of index of authority or of widespread use, up to the time I began my study. Strauss was also the joint author, with B. G. Glaser, of an earlier, well-regarded, volume *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research*. (Glaser and Strauss 1967)<sup>1</sup>. Not appearing in the index, I read the Strauss volume looking for a mention of the word 'metaphor', and found none. The text is as rich with author's metaphors as any other text concerned with trying to describe things social - as we saw with Locke's and Heidegger's writing. If it is the case that the word metaphor does not appear in QASS, which I so believe, then it seems to me to be an extraordinary phenomenon, given that the subject matter is largely about the imaginative interpretation of ethnographic data - a close relative, 'paradigm', is common. It seems not entirely unreasonable to suppose that it is as if the notion of metaphor had been deliberately concealed. For an example of metaphor at work, through some substitutes, despite its apparent rejection, we may take one of Strauss' own reports of a doctoral supervision.

#### **The student who was studying the history of science in an English hospital**

I now turn to part of a chapter entitled *Integrative diagrams and integrative sessions*. In a section entitled: *Steps in integrative diagramming: a work session*, a recorded doctoral supervision (conference) is offered as an exemplar. I acknowledge that this example is not of a substantive piece of ethnography, but it does illustrate the thinking and development processes of a prominent exponent of qualitative research methods. The student is described as far along in collecting and analyzing her data, and has having "a fine analytic mind." She has been reading

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1 Glaser and Strauss parted ways sometime after their collaboration, Glaser accusing Strauss of being overly, and unnecessarily, prescriptive with their earlier joint notion of 'grounded theory'. See (Glaser, 1992).

records of early neurophysiological research done at a London hospital, and has become interested in how a particular view of brain functioning gained widespread and persistent acceptance among neurophysiologists (Strauss comments that the view still persists as at his writing), despite what Strauss calls "its very shaky scientific basis"<sup>1</sup>.

She is deep into the sociology of science and into the substantive materials of her research (on the development of brain localization work and associated debates during the late nineteenth century). Whereas her instructor knows relatively little about these materials, knows something more about the sociology of science and much about the sociology of work. (Strauss 1987: 171)

Strauss comments at this stage that readers of this conference summary may have difficulty with its substantive detail as did he, the instructor. Later Strauss will comment that the session is notable also for the speed and cumulative development of its analytic evolution. As it is one of the claims for the use of metaphor that we are so at home with it that it operates almost instantly, my interest was engaged.

In phase one of the supervision the supervisor's first three contributions were questions trying to become clear about the student was saying. Then the fourth contribution was a statement:

What's important here is the perceived priority in terms of the work that they were doing. Obviously, the mapping work was perceived as the main enterprise and the other kinds of work either were used to further that concern or somehow dumped. Would it be possible for us to make a list of the kinds of work that were going on, and what the priorities were? (Strauss 1987: 173)

This contribution is significantly different from the previous three made by the supervisor. This is characterised by a change of style, statements in place of questions, by a confident definition of values and significance. No suggestion of an hypothesis being tentatively put forward as if by a colleague - thus breaking rules earlier described. This is a God-like declaration and we are only a few moments into the supervision. We should also notice what it is that the supervisor has done with such confidence. He has mapped his domain knowledge of the sociology of work onto the researcher's domain of inquiry. The history of the philosophy of science is construed as if it were modelled upon work in manufacturing industry. The supervisor, consciously or otherwise, has set up a metaphor, he has brought his own experience forward in order to understand the new.

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1 It is of interest here that Strauss writes as if there were something else, called "science", together with its cognates, against which the actions of the medical community may be contrasted. I allege that this arises, in part, when the metaphorical basis of language is resisted, and when there are concerted attempts within a community to fix terminology in a way which does not otherwise occur.

His assumptions presumably include that the student has sufficient overlap of her own experience with his own - presumably in knowledge of common publications. In his comments leading up to a verbatim recording of the conference Strauss remarks:

The session is notable also for the speed and cumulative development of its analytic evolution.  
(Strauss 1987: 172)

which is exactly what one expects from human ability with metaphor. As we might expect, the verbatim text of the conversation which followed is rich with metaphor. With 'L' as the student and 'A' as Anselm Strauss, it begins:

1. L. What I'd like to do in this session is to map out salient areas in the data and try to get a sense of what the territory looks like overall, then go back to individual things in greater depth later.  
(Strauss 1987: 172)

The use of mapping here is not quite as metaphorical as we might suppose if the intention were otherwise than to draw diagrams. Nevertheless to draw diagrams may itself be regarded as a metaphorical exercise. 'Salient', too, may be similarly regarded in so far as it a term drawn from a vocabulary of vision. Contribution 5 reads:

5. A. So he spent eighteen years essentially filling in this map?
6. L. Yes, it got more packaged over time ... After the first ten years, for instance, they started having mimeographed forms of the brain, that they could just shade in the areas. Which was really silly because brains are very different from one another, and he was trying to achieve a precision of up to one-sixteenth of a millimetre.
7. A. So there was a kind of fitting process that went on, using the information from the monkey experiments and putting it into this map? But there was information that didn't fit, what happened with that? (Strauss 1987: 173)

Strauss, the supervisor, leads even at this stage. What the student had originally introduced as a "grid" in contribution 2 has become a "map" in 5. Further, the work of the clinician researcher has been transformed into "he spent eighteen years essentially filling in this map?" He has already introduced the idea of a repetitive, routinized, work - a putative metaphor. This is immediately picked up by L and developed: "Yes it got more packaged up over time". Ted Cohen smiles. L immediately selects an industrial-mechanical item from the many she might have selected: "... they started having mimeographed forms of the brain" - the high technology of the period - and not only does the student feed back this associated commonplace of the industrial metaphor, she includes an indication of the further routinized work: "...that they could just shade in the areas." Her gloss on this, that "Which was very silly because brains are

very different from one another" is, in its own way, Whiggish history. She is reading the past in the light of the present - a form of metaphor which could be resisted. Strauss does not pick this up, but uses his next opportunity to repeat his notion of the "fitting process" and does so in the form of an escalation; he precedes his repeat with: "So ...", thereby indicating an agreement achieved<sup>1</sup>. One exchange later, comes the contribution to which I earlier pointed:

9. A. What's important here is the perceived priority in terms of the work that they were doing. Obviously, the mapping work was perceived as the main enterprise and the other kinds of work either were used to further that concern or somehow dumped. Would it be possible for us to make a list of the kinds of work that were going on, and what the priorities were? (Strauss 1987: 173)

The vocabulary is now firmly in the area of industry: 'priority', 'work', 'enterprise', and the next task will be to emphasize this: "Would it be possible for us (sic) to make a list of the kinds of work..." And with the "us", Cohen's cultivation of intimacy continues. By now, we should expect the metaphor to be in place and doing its work. The very next contribution is:

10. L. Well, there was the standardization-mapping work. And then there was verification work, which was underneath it, not so much of a priority. And then there was clinical work, too. (Strauss 1987: 173)

The new metaphor is now fully established, in this phase the student's data is now being interpreted through the supervisor's experience. There is one other point of interest in contribution 13, in which the student introduces a word to which I am unused:

13. L. There was also an historical accident, which was the introduction of potassium bromide for the treatment of epilepsy. It was the first really effective drug to control seizures, and it was introduced some time in the 1870s, I think. They used, literally, tons of it at the National Hospital. So you had this effectiveness that somehow could be parlayed into legitimating the maps, I think. (Strauss 1987: 176)

The term to which I am unused was "parlayed". My (U.S.) Merrriam-Webster gives the following:

- a: to exploit successfully
- b: to increase or otherwise transform into something of much greater value<sup>1</sup>

So, this one contribution from the doctoral student contains:

- (a) a recognition of contingency: "an historical accident",
- (b) an awareness of the slipperiness of language by her use of "literally", and
- (c) the use of "parlaying", I suppose we might say 'talking-up'.

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1 It would have been somewhat less metaphorical had Strauss used a vocabulary of language and 'categories' - a contrast which points to the metaphorical nature of his procedure.

In this case she has the basis of a theory about the relation of the change in technology and its use to legitimate current beliefs, and it is based upon something which looks suspiciously like metaphor, “parlaying”. Her supervisor changes the topic immediately:

14. A. OK, but what about the tumour patients who died? These clinical people were, literally, burying their mistakes. Why? Why were the mistakes ignored? (Strauss 1987: 176)

I am not intending to offer a critique of Anselm’s Strauss’ supervision methods, but trying to accomplish that difficult exercise, an argument from silence. I conclude that Strauss is working very hard to prevent himself, and his students, from being accused of allowing ‘mere metaphor’ to be at the centre of their interpretations of their data. But, in spite of Strauss’ apparent efforts, metaphor still goes about its work<sup>1</sup>.

## Metaphor and Meta-ethnography

I was much encouraged by a metaphor I found in *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*: “reflexivity is the ethnography of the text” (Latour and Woolgar 1986: 284) and one of the texts which helps to expound this significantly for me, has been *Meta-ethnography: Synthesizing Qualitative Studies*, (Noblit and Hare 1988). Noblit and Hare’s subject is the comparative textual analysis of published field studies. The Editors of the series in which this volume is published write that of the three ways in which a set of ethnographies may be written, the first is that: “ethnographies can be combined such that one study can be presented in terms of another.” This, in the use of the terms used here so far, is straightforwardly metaphorical, and Noblit and Hare are explicit about this quite early on:

*Metaphor* is a term that we develop in some detail. For now, it is important to know that when we talk about the key metaphors of a study, we are referring to what others may call the themes, perspectives, organizers, and /or concepts revealed by qualitative studies. Further, while we discuss criteria for adequate metaphor and the appropriate form of translations, we wish to be clear that, in the interpretative paradigm, any interpretation, metaphor, or translation is only a possible reading of that studied. (Noblit and Hare 1988: 14)

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1 There seems to be an item of commonality between Strauss and Goffman, and this might be that both were students of E. C. Hughes. Hughes encouraged his students to study one kind of work as if it were an example of another: “The comparative student of man’s work learns about doctors by studying plumbers; and about prostitutes by studying psychiatrists. ” (Hughes 1971: 316)



this seems to be a claim that when others are writing of “themes, perspectives, organizers, and /or concepts” they are employing metaphors. Earlier Noblit and Hare have prepared the ground for their inclusive use of metaphor:

Meta-ethnography is the synthesis of interpretative research. To preserve the uniqueness and holism that characterize qualitative studies, we argue that one form of meta-ethnography involves the translation of studies into one another. The translation of studies takes the form of an analogy between and / or among the studies ... We argue that meta-ethnography should be interpretative rather than aggregative ... As the range of interpretative, qualitative social research expands, we will need to focus our discourse on how we might compare our accounts. This focus must occur even if, as Geertz (1973) argues, there is little prospect of creating a general theory of interpretivism. (Noblit and Hare 1988: 10-11)

My interest in the way that Noblit and Hare are writing, has to do with what I take to be one of the political issues arising out of my view of metaphor and its place in a social or even, perhaps, in a natural science. They set up a contrast with Miles and Huberman’s first edition of *Qualitative data analysis*:

The more formal qualitative researchers (e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1984) see the issue of comparing studies as one of the explicitness about the processes we use to analyse our data. We tend to agree with Marshall's (1985) assessment that this is the "bureacratization" of data analysis<sup>1</sup>. The meta-ethnographic approach we develop here takes a different tack: We focus on constructing interpretations, not analyses. To our way of thinking, the synthesis of qualitative research should be as interpretive as any ethnographic account. (Noblit and Hare 1988: 11)

Emboldened by Latour and Woolgar, I take meta-ethnography to be the ‘conversation of mankind’. I read Noblit and Hare in a transformation. I take them to be writing, in effect, of the processes which will take place at some stage in a democratic evaluation of a proposal for intervention. In other words, I take meta-ethnography, as here described, to be an analogy for a version of public, democratic, political conversation, a conversation which will become more public as science, of whatever form, turns towards understanding complexity.

A meta-ethnography seeks to go beyond single accounts to reveal the analogies between the accounts. It reduces the accounts while preserving the sense of the account through the selection of key metaphors and organizers. The ‘senses’ of different accounts are then translated into one another. The analogies revealed in these translations are the form of the meta-ethnographic synthesis.” (Noblit and Hare 1988: 13)

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1 Miles and Huberman refuted this characterization in their second edition.

Writing of the problem of ethnographic synthesis and commenting upon an attempt to write two summaries of five cases of desegregation in US schools, Noblit and Hare, acknowledging the processes of their learning, concluded:

Thus the experiment in reality compared the essay summary format with the full report summary format, with both focused on seeking common findings. While neither is an unusual way to summarize findings, they both entail an unstated theory of social explanation that focuses on aggregate patterns of results. As such, these summaries are akin to positivism, although we did not understand that at the time. (Noblit and Hare 1988: 21)

Having claimed that abstractions from grounded explanations must be metaphoric they continue:

by treating these abstractions as metaphoric, we prevent premature closure on their meaning .... Certainly all generalizations pay the price of empirical accuracy to any particular case, but a metaphoric explanation maintains the complexity of the case, while at the same time facilitating a reduction of the data.

The abstraction in a meta-ethnography seemingly requires that the synthesis will involve and employ metaphors, since metaphors are involved in "the fundamental questions of similarity, identity, and difference." (Brown 1977:79). (Noblit 1988:33)

Brown argued that there are three basic criteria for the adequacy of metaphors in social science: economy, cogency, and range, (Brown 1977: 104-5) which criteria would be helpful at the stage of public discussion of proposals.

Noblit and Hare are not writing for my analogical reading, but they do link with my preference for a pragmatic reference:

In many ways, the effective analogy for the synthesis of interpretative accounts is one that the audience to the synthesis finds useful and insightful... (Noblit and Hare 1988: 76)

There are, however a number of points at which my reading requires some caveats to be entered. These are to be found at the level of the work done by the meta-ethnographer for the wider debate. Noblit and Hare include notions such as:

This is achieved by ensuring that the metaphors and analogies employed reveal the ways in which the world views of audiences are alike and dissimilar from those of the authors of the accounts. This, of course, implies that the synthesizer must be a student of the culture of the audience to the meta-ethnography, as well as a student of interpretivism. ... Obviously, we must know our audience and have discovered their perspectives as these relate to any synthesis (Noblit and Hare 1988: 76/7)

This, of course, implies that the person conducting the synthesis understands what this large discourse concerns. In part, this meaning is derived by placing the accounts being synthesized

into the context of larger disciplinary arguments, epochal frames of thought, and so on. (Noblit and Hare 1988: 79/80)

When reading Noblit and Hare in my analogical way, I am assuming that the ethnographies being re-read have already been written in such a way as to make the metaphorical bases explicit - thus rendering a further metaphorical analysis redundant together with the person conducting the synthesis. However, no matter how explicit the metonymy and or metaphor contained in the ethnographies they remain metaphorical in the way that Lodge described above. Further, no matter how explicit the metaphorical style and content (I am trying to avoid 'nature') that the meta-ethnographies evince, they remain metaphorical. In terms I used earlier, Language is still language.

## Conversation

I think that I can no longer allow the notion of conversation to be taken for granted, and I would like to close this chapter by reference to a number of remarks, by writers already cited, on this topic. I begin with Michael Oakeshott, used by Richard Rorty, and also by Norman Geras in his critique of Rorty:

Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure. It is with conversation as it is with gambling, its significance lies neither in winning or in losing, but in wagering. Properly speaking, it is impossible in the absence of a diversity of voices: in it different universes of discourse meet, acknowledge each other and enjoy an oblique relationship which neither requires nor forecasts their being assimilated to one another. (Oakeshott 1959: 10-11)

Interestingly, here, Oakeshott speaks of *universes*, plural. His metaphor, universes of discourse, would have delighted Vico and Herder, and precedes Shotter's 'multiverses'. (Shotter, 1993a: 121)

Conversation flows on, the application and interpretation of words, and only in its course do words have their meaning. (Wittgenstein 1981: no.135)

The primary human reality is persons in conversation. (Harré 1983: 58)

Derrida is almost wholly concerned to elaborate texts in an attempt to demonstrate a different kind of writing, an activity which he cannot easily separate from reading. I take this to be Derrida's way of paying respect to conversation, of which the distinguishing mark is the interplay of speaking and listening. Writing, unless one takes steps to avoid it, is monological.

Even when a writing is the writing of a dialogue, it does not manage entirely to discard its fundamental monological structure.<sup>1</sup>

Erasmus, translating the New Testament, gives John 1.1. as "In the beginning was the conversation."

To re-read Gadamer on language feels like returning home, he is trustworthy, sure-footed on treacherous slopes:

We say that we "conduct" a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. Thus a genuine conversation is never the one that we want to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. No one knows in advance what will "come out" of a conversation. Understanding, or its failure, is like an event that happens to us. Thus we can say that something was a good conversation or that it was ill fated. All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it – i.e., that it allows something to "emerge" which henceforth exists." (Gadamer 1965: 383)

Richard Rorty, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, comes at conversation from his usual direction:

If we see knowing not as having an essence, to be described by scientists or philosophers, but rather as a right, by current standards, to believe, then we are well on the way to seeing conversation as the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood (Rorty 1980: 389).

Significantly, from my point of view, Taylor's view is:

A conversation is not the coordination of actions of different individuals, but a common action in this strong, irreducible sense; it is *our* action. It is of a kind with – to take a more obvious example – the dance of a group or a couple, or the action of two men sawing a log. Opening a conversation is inaugurating a common action. (Taylor 1995: 189)

Of the two metaphors which Taylor introduces here we should notice that the first: a conversation is a dance, is one of Nietzsche's central metaphors. Taylor continues:

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1 We should notice the different ways in which monological and dialogical are used. Charles Taylor uses them simply to distinguish acts of a single agent, and those of more than one (Taylor 1995: 171). Bakhtin uses 'dialogical' in a more interactive sense, where the interaction results in an identifiable change. (Bakhtin 1986: 91. cited by (Shotter 1993: 122) Bakhtin also uses this interaction view in his theory of the novel, where he supposes that there is a dialogue between the author and his writing, such that the author's voice is changed in the writing of the novel. (See, in particular *Discourse in the Novel* (Bakhtin 1981: 259ff) I take this also to be a hidden feature of the writing of ethnography and meta-ethnography and contributing to the enigmatic nature of ethnography.

Intimacy is an essentially dialogical phenomenon: it is a matter of what we share, of what's for us. We could never describe what it is to be on an intimate footing with someone in terms of monological states. (Taylor 1995: 190)

I share much of Davidson's point when writing on Gadamer:

Understanding, to my mind, is always a matter not only of interpretation but of translation, since we can never assume we mean the same thing by our words that our partners in discussion mean. What is created in dialogue is not a common language but understanding; each partner comes to understand the other. And it also seems wrong to me to say agreement concerning an object demands that a common language be first worked out. I would say: it is only in the presence of shared objects that understanding can come about. Coming to an agreement about an object and coming to understand each other's speech are not independent moments but part of the same interpersonal process of triangulating the world. (Davidson 1997: 432)

My own preferred image about coming to understand each other's speech within the view I have been trying to describe, draws something from a contemporary game<sup>1</sup>. A tray has eight rows of four holes, each hole able to hold a coloured peg, there being some 6 or 7 colours of peg available. At one end of each row for the four colours there is a square formation of four smaller holes to contain a combination of black or white 'scoring pegs'. One player, let's call her the 'Setter', sets out a choice of four colours in a row that can be conveniently concealed from the other player, 'Solver'. Solver's task is to discover the pattern of colours so set out by Setter. The method is for Solver to 'hypothesize' a solution, filling the first row of holes with a choice of coloured pegs, which Setter will 'score' by placing a white peg to signify a right choice of colour not in the correct position, or a black peg signifying a right colour in a correct position, in the block of four smaller scoring holes at the end of each 'hypothesis row', it not being possible, by a direct relation, to know which scoring peg relates to which hypothesized coloured peg. A solution is normally found before the eighth row is reached. This is the way to play the game by the supplied rules. By custom, when I play with friends, we play by not setting up the target row at the start. The game starts by Solver setting out the initial hypothesis row and by Setter scoring it, perhaps more or less arbitrarily on the first hypothesis. So the game proceeds. In the game played by the official rules, there is only 'player', since the other, having once set up the target pattern, is then reduced simply to being 'scorer'. Whereas, in our local form of the game, both players are fully engaged all of the time, Setter being just as much controlled by the scoring pegs as is Solver. Many find this an unacceptable arrangement. There is a need expressed for their to

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1 Marketed in UK as Mastermind see Appendix Figure 1.

be a 'right' answer, and without the certainty that there is indeed a right answer, many will not play - "there is no point". I, of course, disagree. This seems to me to be a helpful image, both in respect of conversation and of a belief in certain knowledge. It is of course possible for Setter, faced by a 'realist' Solver demanding the certainty of knowledge, successfully to conceal that she has not in fact placed coloured pegs in the concealed holes. Should friendship be threatened by such deceptions? Which arrangement promotes the greatest satisfactions? Why cannot I convince all of my friends that they should, at least on occasion, play this way? Give reasons for your answer.

## Chapter 9

### **Metaphor: an invitation remaining to be accepted**

From time to time, above, I have touched upon matters which might be thought to have implications as to the possibilities of a social science. I did not dwell upon these points. The effort to try to keep metaphor at the centre has been accompanied by unsettling experiences. Former certainties have melted, then metamorphosed, only to melt away again. An example is the general one of the concept, to which Sarah Kofman's opening remarks are apposite:

It seems to me more Nietzschean to write conceptually in the knowledge that a concept has no greater value than a metaphor and is itself a condensate of metaphors, to write while opening up one's writing to a genealogical decipherment, than to write metaphorically while denigrating the concept and proposing metaphor as the norm. (Kofman 1993: 3)

Once the concept had melted, the rhetoric of natural science became problematic and, quickly, much traditional social science followed. This path is a short one and led to me find some comfort in pragmatism, and to come to see a supportive link between it and keeping metaphor at the centre. I have qualified social science here by the use of "traditional" as a way of keeping open the possibility of social science in some form. I recognize this problematic as one I have to face, but feel unqualified to attempt it directly. My approach to date has been tangential - as is appropriate within a conversation which has privileged the notion of contingency - or I could approach it by considering some small component, as in the previous chapter.

Such a move, however, might be said to amount to little more than a recording of my curiosity as it was some three or four years ago, together with a statement about some aspects of ethnography as I then understood it. Now, towards the end of my study, my curiosity is focused elsewhere. From my perspective of trying to keep metaphor at the centre, what of a social

science? It seems that we are still too close to the successes of natural science and its relation, technology, easily to be able to separate a body of knowledge about the social. Closer still, to the descriptions of science from sociologists. One of the aims of the Enlightenment project was to wrest some power from the church and the doctrines which it strove to uphold, another was to gain freedom from a "self-imposed tutelage", a move in the direction of autonomy. In spite of Vico and Herder and their followers, a clear distinction between a universe of natural science and a plurality of universes of the social - Shotter's 'multiverse' is rather more elegant (Shotter, 1993: 121) - has not found a secure and widely acknowledged home<sup>1</sup>. For some twenty years I saw natural science through the eyes of Kuhn and those of Mary Hesse and also, if somewhat reluctantly, of Paul Feyerabend. I do so still, but much has also changed. The problem was succinctly put by Latour and Woolgar:

The revision of epistemological preconceptions about science raises awkward questions about the nature of its social analysis. Can we go on being instrumentally realist in our own research practices while proclaiming the need to demystify this tendency among natural scientists? Should we be vocal about the social processes of science, hitherto hidden from view, and yet silent about the social processes of our own research? (Latour and Woolgar 1986: 276)

Their proposals include:

A more reflexive appreciation of laboratory studies is less dismissive of what might be called "the problem of fallibility": the argument that *all* forms of description, report, observation and so on can always be undermined. However, instead of using this argument ironically (Woolgar 1983), as a way of characterizing the work of *others* (scientists or other sociologists) while implying that our own recommended alternative is free from such deficiencies, we should accept the universal applicability of fallibility and find ways of coming to terms with it. Instead of utilizing it in a merely critical role, the aim would be to retain and constantly draw attention to the phenomenon in the course of description and analysis. We might as well admit that as a "problem" it is both insoluble and unavoidable, and that even efforts to examine *how* it is avoided are doomed in that they entail an attempt to avoid it. We need to explore forms of literary expressive whereby the monster can be simultaneously kept at bay and allowed a position at the heart of our enterprise. (Latour and Woolgar 1986: 283)<sup>2</sup>.

Holding metaphor at the centre, I see communities clustered around metaphors busying themselves elaborating the metonymies in the name of natural science, and creating varieties of institutions to safeguard the new-found intimacies, without any clear requirement to explore the

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- 1 In spite, also, of the adoption by J. S. Mill as the epigram for his *On Liberty* of Wilhelm von Humboldt's "The grand, leading principle, towards which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity." from his *Sphere and Duties of Government*.
  - 2 In addition, I have in mind some of those writings with which I have only little acquaintance e.g. (Knorr-Cetina 1981)



complexity of relationships involved in related technologies. In some cases these arise in the way that Kuhn described, in others there has simply been a kind of accident, a chance. But, I suppose, not merely a chance. The chance happens in a certain situation at a particular time, in sufficiently propitious circumstances. This can happen in the natural sciences, where sometimes the story comes to be told as with Flemming and penicillin, or with the determined game-playing of a Crick and Watson. More normally, the narrative built around a particular series of enterprises is retold to the benefit of the scientific community more generally (Fuller 1997). Elsewhere, in the arts for example, chance is recognised, sometimes as serendipity, and accidentals come to be valued. Sometimes these processes are unclear and take one by surprise, as the following story might illumine.

### **An example of a nascent metaphor**

In September 2000, more precisely at 10.26 am on the 26th of September, I e-mailed a friend, who is interested in time as an aspect of social theory, to tell her of a passage on metaphor and time which I had found in an essay on Melville (Wood 1999), the author of *Moby Dick*, the reference being to a passage in his lesser known novel, *Pierre*. I concluded the message with the following:

I suppose that some of the significance of this for me has to do with Melville, along with a few others such as Mark Twain, being one of the writers who first legitimates the vernacular in American writing, and who thereby legitimates vernacular action - I'm not quite sure what I mean by vernacular action, but I will work it out in due course...

It was in this way that I found myself writing of 'vernacular action'. I found that I had typed that phrase, without ever having come across it before, as far as I am aware, nor having previously considered it. Here a metaphor had emerged, without any explicit effort to produce it on my part, and so presents itself for inspection. According to the view I have been setting out, any new metaphor has, so to speak, two sites leading to its generation. One is the context of its first use, the other is the previous experience including experience of the terms used.<sup>1</sup>

### **The context of the first use**

I have already indicated the context of first use as being the writing of an e-mail, a gift to friend of an item likely to be of interest. But, of course, it was more than that. I notice now, months

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1 One of the consequences of valuing the first use of a metaphor and the related antecedent experience, is that any study of metaphor cannot, in my view, be separated from history.

afterwards, that I did more than offer a gift. I also added the sentence which I quoted above, a sentence which serves as an attempt to connect my correspondent's interests with my own. This may be read as an attempt to stand yet closer to my friend - a reading I cannot easily deny. So the metaphor arises in a context of persons in relation, and in that context a new situation- that of considering the linkage of 'metaphor' and 'time' as described by Melville. I now notice that it emerged in a way which Ted Cohen would immediately recognize as an aspect of 'cultivating intimacy'.<sup>1</sup>

### **The previous enabling experience**

As for any previous enabling experience, I could point to my familiarity with 'vernacular' in most, if not all, the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary's (SOED) description of a gradual widening of use for the term<sup>2</sup>. I also have reason to believe that I had probably read, at some time during the previous three years, an extract from Michael Oakeshott, cited by Rorty in his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, and about which I shall say more later. I should also admit to a 'political' component to my purposes behind this enquiry into metaphor. This concerns a long held belief that the resistance to metaphor could be linked with what I had thought of as 'oppression' by one group of another. I nursed the related hope that making the work of metaphor more visible one might thereby help to redress that imbalance.<sup>3</sup> I mention this because these beliefs and purposes had fallen into the background during my study and were now re-emerging as a matter of concern as my writing developed.

So, we may say that my acquaintance with the term 'vernacular' is much as is described by SOED, which tells of a first use in 1601 as an adjective, and later (1706) also as noun, said to be derived from a Latin use referring to a child born to a slave in the master's house - an etymology new to me. First used to indicate the native or indigenous language of a country or district (1601), by 1645 had been extended to identify a particular dialect; by 1661, used to refer to the literary works, written, spoken or translated in(to) such languages. By 1716 to so identify particular

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1 My correspondent replied to tell of a coincidence, in that she had been reading Blanchot on Melville when she had opened my e-mail. She also asked for more about 'vernacular action'.

2 I also restored a vernacular building, a coursed rubble cottage, during a year of part-time employment.

3 I have since come to see the issue as a much wider, in part from following Michael J. Reddy and his article *The Conduit Metaphor*. (Reddy, 1993)

words, and by 1845, used more generally in the discussion of such languages and dialects. As early as 1857, it was used in the description of local cottage building of the period, and of other arts. By 1876 it was being used as a non-pejorative synonym for 'jargon' to describe the phraseology and idiom of a particular profession or trade, but whether this last use was considered to be figurative at the time, I am not able to say.

My main acquaintance with the term had been in relation to the move from Latin, in Europe, prior to and during the Reformation. I have also experienced it as a euphemism when referring to words taboo in one group, but acceptable in another. I am more familiar with its use in architecture. For reasons of space and time, among others perhaps, I shall not describe my prior uses of 'action'.

As to how the two terms 'vernacular' and 'action' had come to be linked, I would have to say, in the absence of anything more identifiable, that the combination of the two terms was a product of brain 'at play', that is, doing one of its normal things. By 'play' here I nod in the direction Huizinga.

### **Vernacular action as metaphor**

Having spoken of its antecedents, I should now turn to speak of 'vernacular action' as metaphor. Having typed the phrase, I was quickly conscious of it as metaphor, being glad of the links between the familiar use of the word in its European context in the decline of the use of Latin, and its subsequent extended use to refer to the vocabularies and idioms of those other than ruling groups, together with the growth of an English literary canon, with the promulgation by parliament of law in English, and with changes in the use of language by particular writers. I say, "in that I was quickly conscious" rather than, for example, "I used this term because...", or again, "I chose this metaphor in order to...". These later phrases imply a false relation between 'arrival at', or 'arrival of', and the 'use' of this metaphor. My experience was, so to speak, that the metaphor suggested itself. Those with a preference for Freudianism, and careless of *its* metaphorical roots, might prefer to say that it came from my unconscious. Those, following Huizinga, might prefer to think of it as the result of a form of play. If I prefer to use the phrase 'suggesting itself', I do so in spite of the anthropomorphism (another form of metaphor), because

this form of words does seem more useful, in that it describes my initial use of the term, without suggesting that I had arrived at it rationally. As with Thurber's reveller, it was more the case that "Darling, I seem to have this rabbit!". Any causal relation to account for the arrival of the metaphor can at best only be inferred. Following Blumenberg's suggestion, perhaps we should be content simply to notice some of the linkages.

I return now to the citation of Oakeshott by Rorty, mentioned above. The citation begins:

A morality is neither a system of general principles nor a code of rules, but a vernacular language. (Rorty 1989: 58)

My reaction upon reading this sentence, a month or more after the e-mail, was sudden, physical. I wanted to shout and surely uttered something aloud. I am reminded of the reactions of those who first see their second image in an ambiguous drawing. Many will shout and stand or gesture dramatically. Such is one of the effects of metaphor. Later, when exploring the original, I discovered that the original reads: "A morality, then, is...." Oakeshott was drawing an interim conclusion, not stating an assumption. I read the sentence as metaphoric: 'A morality is a vernacular language' and, as such, I read it as comprising a significant part of 'vernacular action'.<sup>1</sup> I take the vocabulary introduced by Carl Rogers to be a contemporary example of the work of a writer inventing a vocabulary which 'catches on' and, in this case, comes to offer the possibility of a vernacular of self disclosure. (Rogers 1961) However, I am not confident that I could justify such a description convincingly to a variety of others. A more literal reading would be preferred.

Oakeshott continues by elaborating the 'commonplaces':

General principles and even rules may be elicited from it, but (like other languages) it is not the creation of grammarians; it is made by speakers. What has to be learned in a moral education is not a theorem such as that good conduct is acting fairly or being charitable, nor is it a rule such as "always tell the truth," but how speak the language intelligently... It is not a device for formulating judgments about conduct or for solving so-called moral problems, but a practice in terms of which to think, to choose, to act, and to utter. (Oakeshott 1975: 78-9)

Rorty uses this metaphor to let us keep 'morality':

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1 Oakeshott was developing an example, drawn from Rabelais, of a religious community accepting Augustine's principle of conduct, 'love and do what you will.' This principle worked, said Rabelais, because of the members' mastery of a vernacular of moral self disclosure and their unhesitating acknowledgement of its authority.

just insofar as we can cease to think of morality as the voice of the divine part of ourselves and instead think of it as the voice of ourselves as members of a community, speakers of a common language. (Rorty 1989: 59) <sup>1</sup>

I wish to use Oakeshott slightly differently. by adverting to Kant's image of the Enlightenment in relation to autonomy.

### **Vernacular action and enlightenment ?**

I have a redescription of that double 'imaginary signification', of 'autonomy' and 'mastery' which has been proposed as characteristic of modernity dating at least back to Kant, in which I am inclined towards replacing these terms as follows. For 'autonomy', instead of understanding a right to make one's own laws, rather to substitute the idea that one may bring one's own experience forward by which to describe a new situation, rather than bring forward another's, whether, for example, of parent, teacher, church or other community. Holding metaphor at the centre implies creating one's own metaphors by the application of previous experience to new situations, *rather than* applying any 'knowledge' given or created by others outside one's own face-to-face group, i.e., outside the relations of trust, and of conversation<sup>2</sup>. A view of the beginnings of the scientific communities in England is usefully described by Shapin, who draws attention to an extension of the face-to-face group by the growth of an honour code among the English gentles. (Shapin 1994).

I am reminded here of Kant's description of the human condition as being under a self-imposed tutelage (Kant, 1784). I understand this 'self-imposed tutelage' as being, at least in part, redescrivable in the vocabulary of experience, metaphor and action. Kant, writing within an efficiently administered society, was constrained to a combination of criticism-within-obedience, and hardly in a position to advocate an explicit policy of framing one's own metaphors - the Cabinet Order against him required that he use his talents "to the progressive realization of (Frederick William II's) paternal purposes". His Faustian agreement with the Emperor has proved costly, within the view I am trying to describe.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Here again Rorty fails, in my view, to address the common-sense issue that we live in a number of different communities, families, groups, role-sets, professional cadres, neighbourhood groups, school classes, peer and interest groups of many kinds.

2 I emphasize the "rather than" as I do not wish to exclude previously articulated metaphor as might be found in 'literature' or in 'the literature' of another, known, community.

3 Whatever merits may be attributed to Kant, he seems here to stand between individuals and

It will be recalled that 'vernacular' may 'literally' be applied to buildings: one speaks of vernacular building which links the style and materials of a building not only to the limited available skills, tools and materials, but also to the combination of uses to which that building will be put: a use which carries with it associations of absence of formal training, and ignorance of any practice beyond the local. I am happy that 'vernacular action' may be linked to this usage; that a vernacular building represents both the basic shelter supporting human life, and the other economic and social purposes for which, even in Corbusier's contested phrase, may be construed 'as a machine for living in'<sup>1</sup>.

I spoke earlier of my 'political' reasons for writing about metaphor, as having to do with trying to redress the imbalance that seems further to undermine the action of the powerless. Those who have not been introduced to the novels, songs, poetry, history, language of their culture are at a disadvantage, not only in absolute terms but often also, and which is worse, in their own eyes. Writing in the vernacular, in the extended use of that term, as did Twain, Melville and D. H. Lawrence, and as happened particularly in English drama post 1945, provides a kind of legitimation of the language of the 'oppressed' and because the language is thereby legitimated, the actions to which it leads, plus perhaps the rationalizations, are at the same time legitimated. But this, as it stands, may be criticised as far too paternalistic a description - a criticism I have already employed against Kant. I would recruit other developments to this cause. I have in mind here the introduction of the 'stream of consciousness' style of writing associated particularly with Henry James: the inventive language-work of James Joyce, whether in *Ulysses*, *Portrait of the Artist* or in the more extreme example of *Finnegan's Wake*, which writings stand as literary examples of Huizinga's view on play. James' style undermines an external Reason and focuses attention upon context and previous experience. Joyce, in a related way, undermines the traditional links between word and object and leaves languaging as a legitimate skill to be enjoyed and which provides a freer context for action, providing room for Huizinga's view of play to have a home within language. Nietzsche's almost unclassifiable writing, but one fiercely

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the creation of their own knowledge based upon their own experience. Alone this is too individualistic a conception. Blake's protest that he must create his own system, or be enslaved by another's - is similarly too individualistic a conception. Consciousness, in my perspective, is a product of human beings in relation - as for Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §354.

1 Striking examples of the vernacular buildings I speak of are still to be found in the chain-makers' and nail makers' cottages of the Black Country, now turned to other uses.

loyal to his view of metaphor, gives support to those inclined to risk its use.

I need another term in place of 'legitimize'. But the phrase 'vernacular action' was used to try to link, in as close a way as possible, the related ideas of the connectedness of language and action. The original place of metaphor is when two people, having some shared experience of events, meet a significantly new situation calling for swift action, where their use of language becomes immediately linked to their actions. Even to say 'linked' already misses the point. The action and the languaging are one<sup>1</sup>. This is not Wittgenstein's point that words are deeds - though this view is not denied. It is rather that the intention to act may incorporate the use of words as part of the action, as accompanying other behaviour. The language use under these circumstances, applying the known to the unknown (rendering different things equal in Nietzsche's formulation), is likely to be both original and 'breaking the rules'; not only are these frequently descriptions of the 'vernacular', but since the language here is doing something new it is, in a rather special sense, 'vernacular'. There has been no time for any process to have worked on it. There is, so to speak, an analogy here, 'metaphorical' is to 'literal', as 'vernacular' is to 'official' or perhaps 'formal'. As I think more of the term, I hope that it will become clear that I value 'vernacular action', as I also value vernacular architecture. The term is beginning to carry, for me, notions of 'honesty', of 'truth to materials' as this expression might be used by a sculptor. Perhaps this notion of 'truth to materials' is one which might yet be further developed - it would be at home in pragmatism. There is another point to be emphasized. I hope that it is clear that, while accepting part of Rorty's suggestion that it falls to the novelists and ethnographers to speak for the powerless in a post-metaphysical culture, I am also suggesting the possibility of something which Rorty seems to deny.

Rorty diagnoses a problem:

Victims of cruelty, people who are suffering do not have much in the way of language. That is why there is no such thing as the voice of the oppressed" or the "language of the victims." The language the victims once used is not working any more, and they are suffering too much to put new words together. (CIS: 94)

and goes on to supply a remedy:

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1 Perhaps even closer, if we were to follow Bourdieu's use of 'habitus' or Merleau-Ponty's corporeal imagery, as does Charles Taylor. All three writers give us cause to consider language, perception and action as even more closely linked than we normally suppose.

So the job of putting their situation into language is going to have to be done for them by somebody else. The liberal novelist, poet, or journalist is good at that. The liberal theorist usually is not. (CIS: 94)

I do not wish to stand in the way of this, though I do imagine that I see a down-side here. I wish rather to propose an additional possibility, even possibilities. Let me try to describe what I have in mind. There is, so to speak, something of a social welfare perspective behind Rorty's position. The job of putting the situation of the "oppressed", the "victims of cruelty", into language is going to have to be done not only *for them* but for the privileged others, *for us*. We will then diagnose the problem, in whatever new vocabulary arises and then offer nostrums, in *our* new vocabulary. The plight of "the oppressed" is now, surely, in at least one respect - that of having to use the other's vocabulary - worse than it was before. We, or Rorty's ironist liberals, make the matter worse. Being explicit about the place of metaphor in descriptions of complex issues, such as social policy, offers the possibility of avoiding such developments. Metaphor invites participation.

An alternative view of metaphor within the development of social policy was put forward by Schön. He described a view of metaphor use, not as one which enables so much the solution of a problem, as the setting of problems. He argues that problem settings are mediated: "by the 'stories' people tell about troublesome situations" (Schön 1993: 138). Schön points to what he describes as one of the most pervasive stories about social services, that of "fragmentation" with its correlative proposal of "integration". The "fragmentation" metaphor conceals the possibility, for example, of a story about autonomy. Schön makes the following observation:

Under the spell of metaphor, it appears obvious that fragmentation is bad and coordination, good. But this sense of obviousness depends very much on the metaphor remaining tacit ... My point here is not that we *ought* to think metaphorically about social policy problems, but that we *do* already think about them in terms of certain pervasive, tacit generative metaphors. (Schön 1993: 138-9)

Making the metaphor explicit does not thereby render the problem situation available to a non-metaphoric solution, it reveals conflict: "The participants in the debate bring different and conflicting frames, generated by different and conflicting metaphors." Schön considers the



possibility of a conflict of *ends* which are incommensurable, and offers a technique which he calls 'frame restructuring', and gives two examples. Reflection on the processes and outcomes, includes the following:

In both cases, there is a social context in which individuals engage with one another in a kind of reciprocal enquiry through which they reset the problem of their problematic situation... in each case, the cognitive work involves the participants in attending to new features and relations of the phenomena, and in renaming...in both cases, it is significant that the participants are involved in a particular concrete situation; at the same time they are reflecting on the problem, they are experiencing the phenomena of the problem... (Schön 1993: 157-8)

In an earlier publication Schön wrote of 'concept displacement' <sup>1</sup>, here he writes of metaphor and cites examples of successful uses of metaphor in complex social policy issues, but is silent about those aspects of metaphor pointed to by Cohen, to whom he makes no reference. I have a hypothesis which suggests that what Cohen describes may be detected in the uses of metaphor as described by Schön.

We may propose an additional, perhaps alternative, view to which I have pointed several times earlier. It is closer to that of education than to that of social administration, and by education I intend something like the humanist notion of *Bildung* as described by Gadamer (Gadamer, 1965: 9ff). It is also linked to a development which may have been taking place without our ever having noticed it. I write of reversing the disparagement of metaphor - a disparagement, evident particularly in the rhetoric of natural science, and one which moved quickly to other parts of modern culture. Knowledge, and the certainty which accompanies it, is the property of science. Resistance to metaphor leads to separated, enclosed communities whose vocabularies have diverged. <sup>2</sup> The consequences of this include that when, for whatever reason, there is an approach for intercourse between two, or more, such groups, however directly or indirectly, effective conversation faces the difficulty of having terms which, if they are said to refer, do so to different objects, processes etc. If they are said to segregate, as for example by Zygmunt Bauman (Bauman 1991: 1), they propose cutting the world around differently conceived joints - a matter sharpened by membership of multiple collectivities - and all this in addition to not having a way of

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1 See footnote on page 77.

2 It was not entirely coincidental, it seems to me, that the enduring pattern of British philosophizing - one characterized by confrontation - should have begun at the same time as metaphor was 'officially' discouraged.

understanding change in science. Conversely, if in the development of any discourse, the metaphors are regarded as central then the connections, commonalities, are in evidence and may be jointly received and explored - to Cohen's delight.

### **Points of departure**

In this brief section, which will take the place of any other conclusion, I offer some points of departure. Departure from the taken-for-grantedness of metaphor which pervades much social thought. Departure from the main body of the thesis and turning towards possible related inquiries. Departure from an earlier conversation within modernity.

We pay an unimaginably high price when we suck the analogies from metaphor and spit out the husk. The history is lost, no longer persons in relation, we risk becoming the objects in another's laboratory. Something of this kind has perhaps been going on, in Europe particularly, for more than two centuries. Might it not be the case that, little by little, our facility with metaphor has been eroded by the continued claims of the ideology of science, such that the quality of our conversation, and therefore the quality of our relationships, has been changed, and the method has been simply that of sucking the analogies from metaphor. And this not merely a burden for the social scientist, but for all.

Even the most democratic conversation, as between peers, is infected. What was once the adventure and mutual engagement of metaphor, the mutual self-creation in community, is transformed by 'knowing' and 'certainty' into something akin to what Nietzsche called the master-slave relationship. 'Knowing' and 'certainty' work to bring play to an end, and reduce metaphor to 'mere'. Learning is transformed from personal engagement into instruction. Community is replaced by rules for rational conduct. Obedience replaces discovery and growth. In all this, Richards' remarks are apposite: the first, offering a datum from which we may make comparison or, if grants are only available that way, by measurement:

The Elizabethans, for example, were far more widely skilled in the use of metaphor - both in utterance and in interpretation - than we are. A fact which made Shakespeare possible. The 18th Century narrowed its skill down, defensively, to certain modes only. (Richards 1936: 94)

Metaphor under-rated, proffers pathology:

The psychoanalysts have shown us with their discussions of 'transference' - another name for metaphor - how constantly modes of regarding, of loving, of acting, that have developed with one set of things or people, are shifted to another. They have shown us chiefly the pathology of these transferences, cases where the vehicle - the borrowed attitude, the parental fixation, say - tyrannizes over the new situation, the tenor, and behaviour is inappropriate. The victim is unable to see the new person except in terms of the old passion and its accidents. He reads the situation only in terms of the figure, the archetypal image, the vehicle. (Richards 1936: 135)

Metaphor-aware, another possibility emerges:

But in healthy growth, tenor and vehicle - the new human relationship and the family constellation - co-operate freely; and the resultant behaviour derives in due measure from both. Thus in happy living the same patterns are exemplified and the same risks of error are avoided as in tactful and discerning reading. The general form of the interpretative process is the same, with a small-scale instance - the right understanding of a figure of speech - or with a large-scale instance - the conduct of a friendship. (Richards 1936: 135-6)

Arthur Miller, reflecting on an earlier period in his life, gives us pause for thought:

In 1948-51, I had the sensation of being trapped inside a perverse work of art, one of the Escher constructs in which it is impossible to make out whether a stairway is going up or down. Practically everyone I knew stood within the conventions of the political left of centre; one or two were Communist party members, some were fellow travellers, and most had had a brush with Marxist ideas or organizations. I have never been able to believe in the reality of these people being actual or putative traitors any more than I could be, yet others like them were being fired from teaching or jobs in government or large corporations. The surreality of it all never left me. We were living in an art form, a metaphor that had suddenly, incredibly, gripped the country. (Miller 2000)

But one regret remains, I am sorry not, so far, to have been able to formulate a more coherent relation between metaphor and a possible social science than has otherwise here been exposed. I entertain the hope that this task will be the easier when the rhetoric of science recognizes the contribution to its endeavours which may be made more widely than currently within a democracy, and the members come to recognize that the quest for certainty, and its achievement, has a downside. The change, I suppose, will happen in the course of conversation - the deepest justification for this writing.

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Appendix 1 - see page 197

The Mastermind Board, showing target and 'hypothesis' peg-holes  and scoring peg-holes 